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EDGAR A. POE

A PSYCHOPATHIC STUDY

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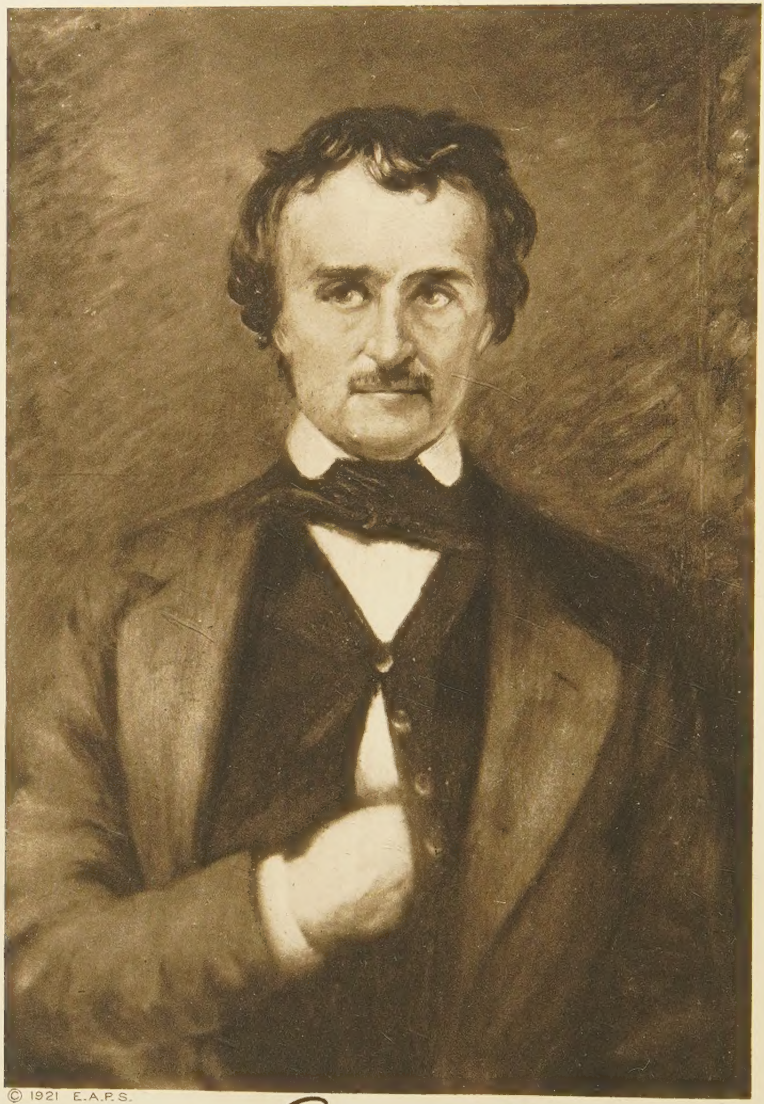

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Edgar A. Poe

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A PSYCHOPATHIC STUDY

Edgar A. Poe, painted in oils for the Edgar A. Poe Shrine by Mrs. Norman Burwell from a daguerreotype once owned by Mrs. Clemm.

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BY
JOHN W. ROBERTSON, M. D.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK LONDON
1923

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FOREWORD

That reaction originating in our cerebrum when either the impressions received by our five special senses, or our more general conceptions, have to be transferred to our brain cells and transformed into responsive comprehension and action, or that still less understood capacity for memory and the "secretion of thought" which necessarily occurs when our brain cells function, cannot be explained by any definitely established scientific theory. Even less can the brain's unconscious cerebration that underlies the dream state, or even normal auto-hypnotization, be more than surmised.

We remain ignorant of the brain's physiology, and each theorist who attempts to psychologize the process by which he thinks only gropes into the recesses of his own brain and can find no law so comprehensive that it will answer as a general solution of this unsolved problem.

Although the law of conception and function may be the same for all normal brains, it is not possible to predict the reaction of each individual brain under the same stress, especially when that brain either by reason of inheritance or because of acquired irritability becomes abnormally sensitive. Every brain, with its resulting personality, is a law to itself, and the judgment that may be passed on one, cannot be held true of another with brain cells differently arranged. Were it possible to X-ray the arrangement of these cells, they would differ as markedly as do the individual finger prints.

Given the psychological training that will interpret fundamental facts, one need not be unduly credulous of, or trammelled by the speculative and by no means authoritative treatises on the "newer psychology."

FOREWORD

The study of psychology does not consist in reading scientific treatises upon brain function that contain definitely established laws. Rather it is empirical and is based upon the study of the many individuals with whom we daily are brought in contact. Applied psychology cannot be taught except through the medium of our own experiences and intuitions—that sixth sense which is given to some of us in far greater proportion than it is to others.

It is given only to a few to study abnormal psychology where all moral restraints have been removed, where inhibitions are no longer in control, and where thoughts are given utterance that by long cultivation have been more or less modified or concealed, and which, in each individual case, must be judged in accordance with the mental state that produces it. For such brains, laid bare by disease, more direct laws have been enunciated. Unfortunately, these individualistic theories are but a reflex of the brains that formulated them.

Ordinarily our study must be based on those individuals with whom we are daily thrown in contact, and we must attempt to remove the concealing garment woven of the many obsessions, compulsions, and fixed habits of thought that they wear, whose existence rests upon hereditary predispositions and impulses so strongly ingrained as to often be beyond their self-control.

In addition to the living, rare study is offered by the many biographies and autobiographies that have been furnished us. Biographies are of less value than the autobiographies because, as a rule, they in no way represent the personality of the individual discussed, except as seen through the medium of the biographer's preconceptions—good or ill as he may be disposed to interpret the facts.

In studying my books, it has always been a difficult matter to separate and dissociate the personality of the man who wrote, from the things written; for this reason

my collection of biographies and autobiographies are co-extensive with the other books collected. I do not believe that the statements contained therein are in all ways authentic, or that they are to be relied upon as an index to the personal qualities and individual traits of the person they attempt to depict. I have found that they are as valuable for what they endeavor to conceal as for what they exhibit, in spite of the fact that their kindly efforts to make plain the inner life end in failure, when they attempt to explain that which is inexplicable. A biographer must psychologize himself before he can psychologize his subject.

A striking illustration of this is found in Bishop's "Theodore Roosevelt and his Time." The gradual change observable in the man whom we loved for his virility, his honesty of purpose, and especially for the enemies that he made, is a regrettable instance of the dominant *ego* of youth slowly transformed into the *megalomania* of age. The bitter antagonism Roosevelt exhibited because of deviation from his councils, his intolerance of all things he had not originated, and his exhibition of wrath aroused because of a just award that fulfilled a moral obligation crowning his own greatest achievement, were but symptoms of an *egomania* that finally ended in an obsession. He mistook the buzzing of the bee for the Call of the People demanding his return to public office. Although in Bishop's statement there is an evident attempt either to explain or to ignore these various assumptions, it is not difficult to read between the lines. He omitted unduly.

Undoubtedly, as is the case with Washington, and as it is rapidly becoming with Lincoln, time will cause these human weaknesses to be forgotten, and Roosevelt may become apotheosized; but such books, dealing with matters still fresh in our memories, arouse only criticism.

What autobiography more depressing could be found than that of Henry Adams, the arch pessimist of his pessi-

mistic family, who laid before an interested world his Theories of Education? That neurasthenic, third-person statement, filled with morbid introspection, should have contained far more of strenuous life and personal impressions than Adams did give out.

Could two more dissimilar lives have been related, yet each, in their way, self-explanatory? In both cases it was the morbid *ego* that dominated.

Notwithstanding the veil of obscurity thrown around individuals by their biographers, and their attempts to explain unexplainable facts and to make the world view their subjects as they themselves have been hypnotized into seeing him, in spite of that strabismus which afflicts all autobiographers when they attempt to see themselves as they desire the world to view them, it is not impossible, nor is it really difficult to judge of the facts, not only from what is stated but, almost equally, from what is omitted.

There is an optical illusion frequently experienced, founded upon the temporary retention of an image by the retina. If one travels at a definite speed past an enclosed and ordinarily view-proof fence (a fence that has slight interstices separating the boards), a perfect view is given of the enclosed interior. Before one fleeting image impressed upon the retina has vanished, another again has impressed its image. A continuous picture is thus formed, identical with that known as a moving picture. In the account of any life, we find knot-holes and cracks, and interstitial glimpses, which give us a full view of the *interior* of such authors as interest us. In this way we may arrive at a very satisfactory knowledge of all that we should know about an individual. To probe deeper is not always the decent thing, nor is it necessary that posterity be familiarized with facts, as in Herndon's "Life of Lincoln," that the individual, or his descendants, desired suppressed.

Certain of these writers have presented such marked

peculiarities, either in what they have written or in the facts of their lives—often in both—as to have been chosen by me as especially interesting psychological problems, well worth the study of an alienist. Blake and Swedenborg, Swift, Bacon, Rousseau, Lamb, Johnson, and many others, are proper subjects for such an investigation. These and others I have painstakingly studied, and have attempted critically to estimate the significance that their peculiarities and personalities should have in a consideration of the things that they have written. I have endeavored to unravel the skein of many threads that constituted their real life, and to view the web of their personality, the woof of which had been composed of most heterogeneous and ill-assorted strands, even when the warp was sound and well stretched, and the completed fabric proved a Royal Robe.

If this composite picture, and this reconstruction, be a necessary introduction to a full understanding of Poe's personality, it is unfortunate that it was not made many years ago. The elapsed time has allowed the acid with which that other portrait was etched-in to "bite" so deeply that the impression formed may have become indelible. Even so, I believed myself justified in attempting it.

In a book, "Poe: A Study," recently privately printed, I attempted to make a psychopathic investigation of the facts of Poe's life, and to interpret them in accordance with such medical consideration as was warranted by his inherited neurosis. In this "Psychopathic Study" of Poe, I also included an analysis of much that he wrote that aided in explaining certain ill-understood phases of his life, or that was of bibliographical interest.

The "Psychopathic Study" constitutes the body of this present publication. To it is added as much of the bibliography as directly deals with the abnormal phases of Poe's mentality; also it includes my further investigations, and such corrections and additions as have been sug-

gested by our leading Poe scholars. Among these may be mentioned Whitty, Woodberry, Campbell and Mabbott.

Inasmuch as the original study made no note of any Poe work except that contained in my own library, and in no way was intended as a complete bibliography, I have omitted it from the present publication, as well as much extraneous matter that was of interest only to my bibliophilic friends.

There is in preparation, however, a work intended as a companion volume to this publication. It will include not only all the bibliography that relates to Poe which was contained in the original volume, as well as new material found in early and rare magazines, but also that desideratum long demanded—a complete Poe bibliography.

Many of these early publications have become extremely scarce and, in a few cases, no complete file can be found. Even so, it is hoped that some original and valuable additions of material hitherto unreported will be made. In this work Thomas Ollive Mabbott will collaborate, and J. H. Whitty, as well as other Poe authorities, will coöperate.

JOHN W. ROBERTSON

San Francisco, California
August 27, 1922

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POE: A PSYCHOPATHIC STUDY

POE:

A PSYCHOPATHIC STUDY

Section I. Poe's Life

THE struggles, the disillusions, and the enmities of life are a part of daily experience. Either death should bring compensating oblivion, or it should throw the mantle of charity over our frailties.

Bitterly as Poe suffered while he lived, and disastrous as was the fate that overwhelmed him, it was his ill fortune to be even more harshly judged in death than while he lived and fought. Alive, he was feared: dead, a dastardly advantage was taken, and his works were sent forth accompanied by a memoir that has been well called an "immortal infamy."

There was an audience that applauded this deed; for, while Poe left behind him but few enemies, he left very many literary enmities. His marvelously accurate estimates of his contemporaries—the "Quacks of Helicon"—as summarized in the various papers constituting "The Literati" and "Marginalia," were the basis for these enmities, and his neurosis, with its characteristic outbreaks, was the foundation of much adverse criticism.

Many other writers have sinned more grievously, and, while they have not obtained the corroborating verdict of posterity to support their judgment, yet their mistakes have been overlooked, forgiven, or forgotten for the sake of the immortal works they left behind them.

While the reputation of no other American writer stands so preeminent as does that of Poe, yet there is, mingled with admiration, mistrust of the man: a belief that much of

the weirdness and vividness of his stories and poems were the result of an abnormal mentality, and that these qualities, of necessity, were the emanations of a brain diseased or drugged. It is difficult to think of Poe without the intrusion of this personal element. Because of the realism of his stories, and his tendency to deal with the horrible and grotesque, it has been unjustly asserted that such creations are not compatible with a normal brain, or with intellectual sanity. Poe achieved such complete success in forcibly presenting his concepts, and in minutely and realistically detailing the ideas and sentiments which characterize his stories, that it is difficult to dissociate the Work from the Man. Yet, that we may fully understand the Man, this differentiation is an absolutely necessary premise on which to base our conclusions.

Poe *was* human, with gentle and lovable qualities, and possessed the graces and refinements that, the world over, mark the gentleman. He was not the unfriended being who regarded society as "composed altogether of villains"; nor was it his habit to "walk the streets in madness or melancholy, with his lips moving in indistinct curses, or his eyes upturned in passionate prayer"; neither can it be justly said that he had "no wish for the esteem or for the love of his species"; nor that he only wished to "succeed that he might have the right to despise a world that galled his self-conceit";—all of which his first editor asserted.

Poe's life was a tragedy. Better would it have been had the good been recorded and the details of his infirmity suppressed. This was not to be.

In a memoir inserted into the first edition of Poe's collected works statements made were so distorted when they had a foundation of fact, and there were many that were so false and without foundation, that succeeding biographers, attempting to refute these charges, have made

assertions not substantiated by well established contemporary evidence.

In reviewing these controversial details I shall attempt no defense of Poe except where the facts have been misrepresented, or where I believe that there have been absolute misstatements. The very nature of this study makes it necessary for me to dwell on certain unfortunate aspects of Poe's life, and on the circumstances that led up to the legends still clustering around his name.

Without special knowledge of the causes that may produce unstable mental states, which only an alienist can possess, no biographer of Poe has been able to grasp in their entirety the essential facts necessary to an understanding of the morbid mental conditions that periodically obsessed Poe and under whose spell he was at the time many questionable acts were committed.

Certain biographers who have been Poe's most active defenders have ignored the more serious charges, or have extenuated and denied them to an extent not warranted by established facts. Only those who are experienced in the study of patients thus afflicted, and who have had personal association with them, can fully understand and appreciate the nature of the neurosis from which Poe suffered, and the difficulty in overcoming such obsessions.

Heredity, which, more than environment, dominates every human being, was responsible both for Poe's brilliant endowments, and for the one evil that was so woven into the web of his life that a mere statement of the evidence, without fully weighing it, might seem to justify the strictures of certain of his contemporaries, but this in no way justifies the vicious assault upon Poe's memory made by his first editor.

Poe inherited a nervous temperament that was pregnant with good as well as evil. This psychoneurotic heredity may manifest itself in many ways.

There are certain unfortunates born into the world who inherit a nervous organization so unstable that the slightest strain will break their nerve resistance and precipitate them into some predetermined form of functional neurosis which no prophylactic measure can prevent; nor can we prognose the exact form this neurosis may take. Often it will be merely a neurasthenia developing under some nerve strain in a person predisposed, which would have no effect on a normally constituted individual; or it may show itself in that Brahmanic form of nervous seizure that we call "megrim," more popularly known as sick-headache. It is a fact to be noted that megrim is, metaphorically, a badge of intellectual royalty.

I cannot believe that a mentally dull and unintellectual person could develop a typical megrim with its various prodromata and its lightning-like onset. Its recurrent nature can be explained only by some form of brain explosion. In this respect megrim is allied with its co-relative, epilepsy, but it differs vastly in its destructive effect both on the brain and on the intellectual faculties. In certain persons afflicted by such an heredity, other neuroses may develop. Not only the genius but the morally or intellectually insane are classed among those possessing this nervous diathesis.

Another common type is that form from which Poe suffered and from which he attempted to escape by the undue use of alcohol and, occasionally, opium. In the particular case of Poe, and because alcohol was his usual refuge, the term "dipsomania" can be properly used; for, in his seizures, this disease was typically manifested. Dipsomania necessarily is an alcoholic inheritance. It is characterized by periodical seizures in which the subject, because of changed personality, is temporarily irresponsible, and cannot, at all times, be held accountable for his behavior or his acts. Those with such an inheritance may indulge in excesses, usually alcoholic, often immoral, and,

occasionally, criminal. When these seizures pass and the patient recovers, there may be, in the severer and progressive form, complete loss of memory. During the attack there is usually loss of self-control and an abnormal ideation. It is a transmitted disease and has an alcoholic heredity. Not every alcoholic father begets a dipsomaniac child. Many children born of such parents inherit other of the functional neuroses; yet, when we find the dipsomaniac obsession, we are certain to find a marked alcoholic heredity, or that alcohol has been persisted in through two or more generations.

Should the parent not have inherited any alcoholic taint and yet drink to excess, the children will show a more or less marked neurosis, especially if begotten when the parent was in a condition of intoxication. In this group are to be included the defective, the criminal, and the crank, as well as those possessing an unstable nervous system that may develop insanity. In addition to these, and as truly the result of heredity, are the precocious, and those having that excessive development of certain faculties that we call genius. Among such individuals a tendency to alcoholic excess is frequently a complicating factor, though often slightly marked and controllable.

While this neurosis may be lessened in this second generation, and, by careful mating, may be eradicated, yet there is an inexorable law of heredity that usually dominates. Those of succeeding generations that do become alcoholic frequently beget the dipsomaniac, or individuals in other ways profoundly neurotic; so that the family cursed with this particular inheritance is frequently destroyed.

Dipsomania is a disease, and those suffering from it should be given such medical consideration as we give the insane. Dipsomaniacs drink because of hereditary compulsion and rarely are they convivial drinkers. It is true that in the early period they occasionally so indulge; but

there is soon established, because of this predisposition, an uncontrollable longing, not necessarily for the taste of alcohol, but rather for the effect, even though the taste be disagreeable.

There is, in the beginning of the attack, a sensation of nervousness and unrest, frequently accompanied by depression. At times this depression amounts to actual mental pain, which, while not seriously interfering with the normal functioning of the intellectual processes, can profoundly influence the moral faculties and may result in inability to judge rightly of their own condition. The will power of such patients may be so weak as to inhibit them from carrying out social acts and unfit them for intercourse. Occasionally this goes to the extent of actual, if slight, mental disturbance which most insistently demands some form of narcotic control, or perhaps immoral excitement. They will seek surroundings that in their better moods would be disgusting, and for days or weeks will disappear, to return seared by the marks of their dissipation, repentant and protesting a horror of alcohol, certain they will never again relapse. Many of the milder cases show no serious moral change and, except for these occasional outbreaks, attract but slight attention even among their intimates. Such cases are amenable to treatment and are regarded as recoverable. Usually time, with proper restorative measures, will cure them, or at least, if not fully restored, their power of resistance may be so increased that no serious brain degeneration will follow.

When the inheritance is more pronounced, and there is marked nervous instability, very serious moral and mental deterioration occurs. When alcohol has been consumed for a long period of time the nerve centers may become markedly diseased. Invariably there is intense congestion, often accompanied by a low grade of inflammation of the

meninges—spider-like coverings composed of a network of arterioles attached to and penetrating the brain convolutions through which the cells of the brain are supplied with blood. These arterioles become thickened, tortuous, and occasionally membranous, adhering both to the skull-cap and the brain tissue. Because of temporary stimulation of the circulation, this organic change frequently results in maniacal outbreaks, often of short duration; or it may, if this change has progressed sufficiently, determine and actually produce a chronic mania.

The more serious forms of dipsomania are at times accompanied by temporary loss of memory, and one peculiarity of this condition is that the patient may, in action and appearance, speech and conduct, appear normal; yet, on recovery, there will be no memory of what transpired during these lapses. Our medico-legal books detail many cases of this kind, and the law as to their irresponsibility is well established. Occasionally prolonged alcoholic debauches terminate in temporary delirium without these serious organic changes; but, when the organic stage is reached, such patients should not be held responsible.

Alienists recognize certain nervous manifestations that are due to heredity and have periodic returns as true mental diseases, and they classify them under the general term "Periodic Insanity." These do not manifest themselves by outbreaks of either excitement or depression; nevertheless they are not normal and are characterized by a weakened or perverted mental state.

One of our well-known authorities on insanity, Spitzka, thus summarizes these conditions:

> Almost any one of the known forms of morbid impulse may appear in periodical phases, but this is particularly the case with the morbid craving for drink, which seizes on its subjects at certain intervals with such intensity that the ordinarily quiet, orderly, refined and sensitive patient, losing all sense of propriety and shame, gives

himself up to unrestrained and ruinous debauchery. This distressing condition is known as Dipsomania. It is to be distinguished from inebriety and alcoholism: for the inebriate is not driven to his excesses so suddenly and irresistibly, nor does he cease them as abruptly as the dipsomaniac. In the inebriate the motive grows out of appetite and habit; in the dipsomaniac it is a blind craving which, if not stilled by alcoholic beverages, will seek some other outlet. Often these patients develop some morbid craving for certain narcotics, and we may thus have a periodical craving for opium analogous to the periodical craving for drink, and as distinct from the ordinary opium habit as is dipsomania from inebriety. As a consequence of his blind indulgence in drink during his diseased periods, the dipsomaniac may become the subject of acute alcoholic delirium or of chronic alcoholism, though the latter is rare; these conditions are to be looked on as results and not as essential features of dipsomania, which is to be defined as *a form of periodical insanity, manifesting itself in a blind craving for stimulant and narcotic beverages.*

In the more serious forms, such as Spitzka describes, there is often found brain degeneration; if so, the prognosis is bad and a cure cannot be expected. These periodical attacks occur with greater and greater frequency, and, unless cut off by some intercurrent disease, organic changes occur, and a brain break with mental destruction may follow.

In the less severe cases, especially those not complicated by organic brain changes, by lapse of memory with automatism, or by other mental disturbance, it is possible, with proper care and enforced seclusion during these seizures, to lessen their severity and to increase the intervals between them until, finally, complete recovery follows.

Spitzka is correct when he says that, during these recurrent periods that characterize the life history of the dipsomaniac, they do not always confine themselves to alcohol. As a matter of fact, they may resort to any form of narcotic; or they may seek other and more bestial ways of gratifying their morbid impulses. At times they develop sexual perversions and hide in some brothel where they

may give full rein to their erotic excitement; or they retire to a gambling den where they may exercise their passions without hindrance; or they exhibit other phases of social unrestraint. I have had patients who would go from one saloon to another seeking the glitter of bar attachments, delighting in the roll of dice, listening to the clink of coin on the polished mahogany, yet they would drink nothing but effervescent waters. They craved these particular forms of excitement, not alcoholic beverages.

After an attack the patient will return to his home and business haunted by the bitter memory of his misdeeds, most earnest and honest in his profession of reform, and he cannot be persuaded to taste alcohol in any form. When such patients assert that they have reformed they are in earnest, and, at the time, nothing can induce them to break their pledge. Yet, when the seizure returns the impulse becomes irresistible, although for days they may fight off the impending catastrophe. When the break occurs they usually attribute it to some trivial cause or circumstance in no way responsible—some family disagreement, business disappointment, or even some lesser matter. Nothing is too trivial to allege in their attempt at explanation.

A study of Poe's heredity and life work makes it plain that many of Griswold's allegations, even when true, cannot justly be charged against Poe, but rather against his morbid heredity. This may seem too fine a distinction, but at least we must recognize the fact that, by reason of this heredity, Poe was not always to be held responsible for either his words or his acts, for his great accomplishments or his lapses. Heredity was as much responsible for the one as for the other; his heritage was pregnant with both good and evil.

Precocity, of necessity, foretells early decline. I view brilliancy in the child as an abnormal heredity that must

pay the price of premature decay. Only occasionally does it happen that the honor-child of our public schools, or the gold-medalist from the university, achieves distinction either in the professions or in public or business life. It is true that this test, alone, is most unfair. Neither money nor distinction may be regarded as the criterion of success; yet it is certain that the quality of brain that readily commits to memory without independence of thought, is not the quality that makes for the common sense and sane judgment necessary for successful competition in our highly organized professional and business life. On the other hand, plodders will never reach the heights. They can be scaled only by those that are endowed with genius.

It was of old believed that certain persons were possessed of a *daimon* or *genius;* and by these terms the Ancients designated what they believed to be the deity that possessed and buoyed up those endowed with the *afflatus divinus.* Although we have adopted this word we use it in a slightly different sense:

> Exalted mental power distinguished by instinctive aptitude, and independent of tuition; phenomenal capability, derived from inspiration or exaltation, for intellectual creation or expression; that constitution of the mind or perfection of faculties which enables a person to excel others in mental perception, comprehension, discrimination and expression, especially in Literature, Art, and Science.

Genius, derived from *genere* (to beget), is necessarily inborn. It develops early and is characterized by precocity. It is most dangerous for the man that possesses and is swayed by it; yet it is an inheritance for which the individual possessing it is in no way responsible, nor can we forecast the destined end to which it will lead him. Such an inheritance leads oftener to disaster than to success. All great things are conceived by the man of genius, and it has been well said, "The Crank turns the World."

Poe was a genius, and he paid the full price for his inheritance.

I do not know of any biography of Poe that, from the psychiatrist's point of view, presents the facts of his life in a manner to make the student comprehend the basic evil that dominated him.

Professor James A. Harrison says:

> Poe's case has never been scientifically diagnosed by a competent neurologist who possessed combined pathological and literary equipment and freedom from prejudice necessary to render his case—more singular than 'The Case of M. Valdemar'—intelligible to the reading world.

Though I may not possess these requisite qualifications, yet am I justified in the attempt; the questions have frequently been asked and so often have been mistakenly answered as to justify a further essay in this direction. Poe's admirers have been overzealous in his defence, while his enemy basely maligned him; whether or not I shall be able to deal justly with the facts and arrive at the truth must be a matter of individual judgment.

I am certain that the pictures painted have not truly represented the man: it is possible that a spirit so proud and a soul so sensitive may not be humanly judged nor accurately weighed in the scales of social justice.

As a rule biographers deem that they have completed their work of establishing hereditary predispositions, on which later accomplishments depend, when they have constructed a genealogy blazed with quarterings, and all the more ornamental if marked with the *bend sinister:* or when they have traced ancestry to some name great because of mental acquirements, or deeds performed, it is assumed that they have thrown a luster about their subjects that in some way glorified them. They know nothing of the Mendelian law of heredity. They ignore the fact that great genius, like that of Caesar or Napoleon, or such

mental gifts as were bestowed upon Newton and Shakespeare, are the results of what horticulturalists call a *sport*, and occur only as an abnormality; and that not only do such geniuses not breed true to their kind, but rather tend to degeneracy and extinction.

"Poor but honest" is not a bad beginning for any biography. The fact that a father is temperate in all things, fearless and honest, kindly and generous in his associations, and that he posesses a strong physique, free from all diatheses and hereditary diseases, is a heritage to be boasted of, and to be prized more than the wealth of a Rockefeller.

It is alleged that the family of Poe traces its lineage to a Norman named De la Poe, who went to England with William the Conquerer. It is also said that certain of Poe's ancestors lived in Derbyshire and that among them was a poet, locally famous. Some evidence has been brought forward to show that his name is of German or Danish origin. Others trace his ancestry to the Poles or Poes of Tipperary. However, the most diligent searcher for the root of this genealogical tree, Sir Edmund T. Bewley, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S.A.I., has proved to my satisfaction that Poe's great-grandfather, who emigrated to America when a boy, sprung from the ancestral tree of Donnybrook, enriched by the red-blood that pulsed in the veins of the Poes of Kilkenney, and that this commingling of inherited traits was strengthened when this ancestor married either the sister, or the aunt, or some other relative of Admiral McBride—genealogists differing as to the relationship; yet it is regarded as important, for all of Poe's biographers dwell on this connection.

It has been definitely ascertained that John Poe, Edgar Poe's great-grandfather, was an Irish immigrant who came to America about 1745, and that he married a Miss McBride. He was a day laborer and, apparently, paid

small heed to the tree from which he sprang. At best the bough he brought with him was but a shillalah; had it been of the "seed of Elach" it would have availed him little. It is certain that this particular branch had not blossomed for many a year, and that John Poe never boasted of his lineage. He had never heard of the De La Poes, nor did he sign his name Poë and, as far as is known, he made no claim to noble ancestry. He was a man who won his way by the strength of his honest, toil-hardened hands; and, if related to Admiral McBride, he did not presume on this relationship.

This fighting strain descended in full force to David Poe, the son of John Poe, and aids in explaining his sudden rise from a worker in wood to the rank of "General" in the Revolutionary army. All biographies refer to him as "General Poe of Revolutionary Fame." This title was one of courtesy only. It was assumed by David Poe because, at one time, he had acted as "Assistant Deputy Quartermaster" for the City of Baltimore. While he held no appointment in the revolutionary forces, he did give aid and comfort to them, supplying the troops of Lafayette with clothing, for which he was never reimbursed.

The date of David Poe's evolution from a wheelwright into a dry-goods merchant is not known, nor whether he passed through the chrysalis stage of a tailor, as has been alleged. The first that is definitely known of his personal prowess was when he swayed and led a patriotic mob that rose in rebellion against tyrannical British domination—in this surely indicating his Irish derivation. He had a son, David, the father of Edgar Poe, and a daughter Maria, to whose child Virginia, Poe was married. In time David Poe became a prominent dry-goods merchant, retaining the title of "General." It is certain, however, that he was more familiar with the yard-stick than with the sword. He was a man of substance and high standing, and we

honor him because he was a good citizen, loyally supported his government, and was generous in its maintenance.

Attempts to trace heraldic escutcheon, or noble lineage, will add nothing to the laurels bestowed upon him because of his unselfish patriotism.

Occasionally family pride is justified. In such a record of tradition and accomplishment as the Adams family exhibits, I see a reason for genealogical pride in deeds performed—in spite of "The Last Fruit Off An Old Tree," that pessimistic note that characterizes "The Education of Henry Adams." Again, the research work and scientific attainments of the family of Darwin, which for generations have made it a name of note, deserve recognition. In the case of Poe there are no such data.

There is a study which must be made in order that we may account not only for the flower of fruition, but also for the root of the evil that afflicted Poe. What we must know for this purpose are certain details as to the mode of life and the alcoholic history of his immediate ancestors, as well as the moral code by which they were governed. That their habits were alcoholically temperate is doubtful. William Poe, a cousin, wrote Edgar as follows:

> There is one thing I am anxious to caution you against and which has been a great foe to our family—I hope in your case it will not be necessary, 'a too frequent use of the bottle.'

Dipsomaniac compulsion, as we see exemplified in the life-history of Poe, presupposes an alcoholic heredity. David Poe, the father, developed an alcoholic syndrome which probably led to his early death. Disowned by his father for his marriage to an actress, a Miss Arnold, he not only failed to support her, but became dependent on her charity, as well as on that of others. This wife and mother seems to have been an intelligent and capable actress, though of no marked histrionic ability. We honor

her because she bore her cross so bravely, and, in spite of the hardships and the strolling life she led, remained a faithful and loving wife and mother.

Eugenically it was an unfortunate marriage, even if the world of letters was so greatly the gainer. The three children, William, Edgar, and Rosalie, each in some way showed specific evidence of this heredity. William died in early manhood. He probably inherited his father's instability of character, as well as his unstable constitution, although I know of no direct alcoholic history. That he was wayward and difficult to control, and had been sent to sea in an effort to reform him, is all that has been definitely established. He is said to have possessed a fascinating personality as well as a brilliant mind. Several of his poems have been published, and, apparently, they compared favorably with Edgar's productions of the same period.

The sister, Rosalie, gave stronger evidence of degeneracy. She was a moron, strong of body but mentally weak.

The early death of Poe's mother resulted in his greatest misfortune. William F. Gill, an early Poe biographer, thus describes the conditions under which Mrs. Poe died:

> Mr. Allan and Mr. McKenzie, both wealthy and benevolent Scotch gentlemen, having been informed that the Poes were in great distress, sought them out to afford them relief. They were found in wretched lodgings, lying upon a straw bed, and very sick, Mr. Poe with consumption, and his wife with pneumonia. There was no food in the house. They had no money or fuel and their clothes had been pawned or sold.
>
> Two little children were with the parents, in the care of an old Welsh woman who had come over from England with Mrs. Poe, and who was understood to be her mother. The children were half clad, half starved, and very much emaciated. The youngest was in a stupor, caused by feeding them bread steeped in gin. The old woman acknowledged that she was in the habit of so feeding them 'to keep them quiet and make them strong.'

Two weeks later, December 11, Mrs. Poe died. The fate of the father is uncertain although it is generally believed that his death preceded that of his wife. It is said that documents which had belonged to the Ellis-Allan firm and which, having been stored away, were not accessible to Poe biographers, rather point to desertion.

Harrison says that Edgar was adopted by Mr. John Allan, who bestowed on the boy his own name. He was never legally adopted, but he was cared for by Mr. Allan.

Harrison thus describes the future home of Poe:

> At Richmond it was (and is) delightful to live, and here in 1811, having been adopted by Mr. John Allan, Poe took up his abode. During his most impressionable years, the City was the most intellectual and the gayest city in the South. It was full of old families that had furnished statesmen, legislators, governors, generals and Congressmen to the United States. . . . Little Edgar's childhood and youth were passed in an atmosphere of sociability, open-air sports, oratory, and elocution.

Raised as the son of a rich man, and accustomed to all the luxuries that should not be given to any child, it is possible that such surroundings brought out and accentuated those hereditary evils that a different environment might have modified. As far as we know, Poe's one expressed desire and longing was for mother-love. The considerate and loving care he lavished on his wife and her mother proves to us that, in spite of his inherited paternal vices, there must have been in him some of the staunch and lovable qualities of his mother; and the love that he always exhibited for Mrs. Clemm redeems him from the charge of having been the cold, repellent, and unfriended being delineated by his first biographer.

Poe early became the spoiled pet of an admiring guardian. No more pitiful picture could be drawn than this:

> A pretty trick taught the boy by Mr. Allan was to drink the healths of the company in a glass of diluted wine. He would stand

on a chair, raise the glass with all the ceremony of those old Dominion days, then take a sip gracefully, then with roguish laugh, reseat himself amidst the applause of the company.

We need not wonder at the peculiar form and abnormal character of his early drinking, considering his heredity, and with such environment. The gin sop could not have more evilly influenced him.

He was mentally precocious and physically well developed. Not only was he brilliant in his classes and remarkable for his mental attainments, but he was the leader in play and all athletic exercises. No wonder the heart of his doting guardian warmed to a being so gifted. But, with all these advantages,

> Evil things in robes of sorrow
> Assailed the monarch's high estate.

The hereditary evil, like the precocity, was also a part of Poe's inheritance. While yet a student there came reports of moral delinquencies and alcoholic excesses which resulted in Allan forbidding his return to the university. A classmate writes:

> Poe's passion for strong drink was as marked as for cards. It was not the *taste* of the beverage that influenced him; without a sip or smack of the mouth he would seize a full glass, without sugar or water, and send it home at a single gulp.

His guardian, no longer willing to countenance his escapades, forced him to work, but, so attached was Mrs. Allan to the wayward boy, that an added unhappiness entered the Allan home.

There is an unwritten chapter in the life of Poe, but the details have never been made public. They deal with the Allan family skeleton, which became a matter of court record. There was marital unhappiness due to the fact that Allan entered into entangling alliances that ended in a notorious will contest. During the life of the first Mrs.

Allan this was probably known to her; and it is said that Poe, then a young boy, was instrumental in finding out for her such information concerning her husband's affairs as she required.

Not only was Poe not adopted by Allan, he was barely tolerated because of Mrs. Allan's very pronounced regard for him. It is said that although Allan knew of Poe's intention to run away from Richmond where, after his recall from the university, he had been compelled to work in Allan's tobacco warehouse, the man took no steps to prevent the flight, but rather encouraged it. Certain it is that Poe did run away and take ship for England, and that when this became known to Mrs. Allan she made every effort to force his return. Certain papers found in the warehouse of Allan, now known as the "Ellis-Allan Documents," which recently have been placed in the Congressional Library, cover a period preceding the "adoption" of Poe, and also a considerable time after all Poe association had ceased. These also may contain letters that were taken from Mrs. Poe at the time of her death. As far as they relate to matters of hereditary significance regarding Poe, they are of value, but not for the purpose of further discrediting the Poe family. It is said that the undue use Allan made of these papers embittered Poe still more, and this goes far to explain the active hostility that existed between them.

That Poe spent two years traveling on the continent of Europe, during which time he visited Russia, Greece, and France, is not probable. We know that it was during this time that the first "Tamerlane" was printed in Boston, but the bibliographical details remain an unsolvable puzzle. While we cannot account for this long period, and know little of the life Poe led and the influences that surrounded him, I cannot agree with Professor George Woodberry's claim to the discovery that Poe enlisted in the

army under the name of Perry and served faithfully, with an excellent record for sobriety and attention to his duties, and that his conduct was so admirable and his deportment so good that, at the end of two years, he was promoted to the highest non-commissioned grade in the service and honorably discharged.

Poe's later biographers have accepted this as an established fact, in spite of existing records which show that the complexion and the color of the eyes and hair of Perry differed from those of Poe. Even this might be accounted for by careless entries. My reason for doubting the discovery of Woodberry is that at no time was Poe amenable to the slightest restraint; nor could he, even for the shortest period, brook discipline. I do not believe it possible for one of Poe's neurotic temperament to have contained himself so completely when placed under such strict discipline and in surroundings so exacting. He enlisted, but earned no discharge. According to a statement of the second Mrs. Allen a substitute released him.

Poe finally was admitted to West Point, although he was over age and temperamentally unfitted for the army. The Perry record was used to prove Poe's personal fitness for such a career and to demonstrate his soldierly qualities. In his application Poe's friends falsified, representing his birthplace to have been Richmond and the year of his birth 1811. He was born in Boston in 1809, and entered West Point in July, 1830, when he was twenty-one years and six months old.

Poe was not proud of his Boston birth, and, in the various statements he gave out for biographical notices, he named Baltimore as his birthplace.

I do not know that any unprejudiced person can blame Poe for denying that he was born in Boston. It was an accident due to the fact that his birth occurred while his mother was there, with her theatrical company. His heart

was in Richmond and, in feeling and later association, he was fanatically Southern.

At West Point, for the first time, we get a lifelike portrayal of Poe, the man. The picture, while illuminating, is not pleasing. It was drawn by a fellow student, apparently his closest friend.

Poe evidently had seen much of life—hard life, which had left its imprint. As a young boy he had been admired for his personal beauty; when he entered West Point his expression was "weary, worn and discontented," and so aged did he appear that it was jokingly said the appointment had been obtained for the son, but he had died and his father took the vacancy. Cheap wit: but at least it showed that the life Poe lived before entering West Point left its mark.

Another report current in the corps was that he was the grandson of Benedict Arnold. Some good-natured friend told him of it, and Poe did not contradict it, but seemed rather pleased than otherwise at the mistake.

He neglected his studies and expressed the greatest contempt for the required military duties—very different from the orderly and punctilious Perry. His alcoholic habits there have been set forth in full. His friend paints his life as most irregular; as consisting of a series of broken rules, defiance of all authority, inveigling younger and less sophisticated youths into infringements of army regulations, and, above all, such utter disregard for all the canons of decency and morality, that the alienist must believe such actions were the result of an acute mental brainstorm, induced by the abuse of alcohol.

Poe apologists have explained these acts as a ruse for escaping from an irksome confinement, and as a means toward regaining his freedom. This is not an intelligible explanation and does not comport with the facts. Other means could have been adopted which more easily and more honorably would have attained this end. Rather, these acts are

in line with the loose and irresponsible life that he had followed for two years before entering the Military Academy. It has been shown that during that time Poe's life was most irregular.

A story, current at the military academy, was told by General Magruder:

> He made a voyage to sea on some merchant vessel, before the mast. Finding himself in the Mediterranean, he debarked at some Eastern port and penetrated into Egypt and Arabia. Returning to the United States, he enlisted as a private in the United States Army at Fortress Monroe. After some months' service his whereabouts and position became known to Mr. Allan, who, through the mediation of General Scott (a cousin of the second Mrs. Allan), obtained his release from the army, and sent him a cadet's warrant to West Point.

It seems to be definitely established that at no time during these years did Poe live an orderly and regular life. He undoubtedly traveled much, possibly as a sailor, for he could not have afforded the transportation of a tourist, and some time must have been spent in the United States, outside the army, as his Boston connection makes evident. In whatever way the Perry record was used, it did not fully represent Poe's life during the whole of that time.

Could the facts of his life history be accurately traced, they would be of great psychological value; they might show the growth of the poisonous vine that later encircled and bound him, and crushed him in its vicious embrace. Such a disease as that from which Poe suffered is most insidious in its approach. The liberties indulged in youth and the lack of restraint laid a foundation that later no will-power could overcome, and which exacted a price of misery, depression and suffering from its victim that passes human understanding.

The only thing to which Poe remained constant during these years of stress and storm was his love of good literature.

At about the time Poe entered West Point he began a correspondence with Neal, editor of "The Yankee." In the issue for December, 1829, and in answer to a slurring notice concerning one of his poems, referred to in the number for September, Poe thus wrote:

I am about to publish a volume of poems, the greatest part written before I was fifteen. Speaking about 'heaven' the editor of the 'Yankee' said: 'He might write a beautiful if not a magnificent poem'—the very first words of encouragement I ever remember to have heard. I am certain that, so far, I have not written *either*, but that I *can*, I will take my oath, if they will only give me time.

Poe quotes only the concluding paragraph. What "The Yankee" really said was:

If E. A. P. of Baltimore—whose lines about heaven, though he seems to regard them as altogether superior to anything in the whole range of American poetry, save two or three trifles referred to, are, though nonsense, rather exquisite nonsense—would but do himself justice, might make a beautiful and perhaps magnificent poem.

After declaring there was very much to justify hope and quoting several stanzas that any Poe lover would regard as typically and Poesquely melodic, the review ends with these lines:

The Moonlight

. . . . . falls—
Over hamlets, over halls,
Wherever they may be,
O'er the strange woods, o'er tne sea
O'er the spirits on the wing,
O'er every drowsy thing—
And buried them up quite,
In a labyrinth of light,
And then how deep! *Oh deep!*
Is the passion of their sleep!

He should have signed it Bah! We have no room for others.

If these are the "first words of encouragement," then Poe's poetic genius must have budded in a literary frost.

The events of Poe's life for the two years following his expulsion from West Point are as great a mystery as those of the years preceding his admittance. Apparently these two periods have become inextricably intermixed as to details, and many events said to have occurred in the first period are certainly duplicated in the last. It seems that at one time Poe did enlist in the army, and that he could obtain his discharge only by inducing Allan to supply a substitute. If, as seems probable, this enlistment preceded Poe's entrance to West Point, it would disprove Woodberry's contention as to the identity of Poe and Perry.

The second Mrs. Allan wrote:

> As regards Edgar Poe, of my own knowledge I know nothing; I only saw him twice; but all I heard of him, from those who had lived with him, was a tissue of ingratitude, fraud and deceit. Mr. Poe had not lived under Mr. Allan's roof for two years before my marriage (1830) and no one knew his whereabouts; his letters, which were very scarce, were dated from St. Petersburgh, Russia, although he had enlisted in the army at Boston.

The little that is known concerning this incident, as well as many other facts of Poe's life at that time, is contained in letters held in the archives of the Valentine Museum at Richmond. Although the contents are known to a few and although they do not reflect seriously on Poe, they are said to contain certain passages involving persons or families still in Richmond, and for that reason they have not been made public. Concealment of any kind is an unfortunate circumstance: whatever may be the result of future investigation, there is always a tendency to exaggerate the most ordinary events, and the smallest fact may be magnified into an unwarrantable statement.

Possibly Poe spent a part of his time in Europe, although it is improbable the distorted account that he related to Mrs. Shew during one of his mental attacks, regarding these European experiences, had any foundation in fact.

At least for some months Poe did live in Baltimore and Richmond, and many definite details of his residence in those two cities are known.

It is certain that Poe's mental capacity fully developed during this period, and that when he appeared before John P. Kennedy he had reached the zenith of his intellectual power.

It was the Golden Age of his literary achievement, and that his genius and capacity had reached their full development is proved by the quality and quantity of tales that were included in the "Folio Club." It was this marvelous collection of stories that gained for him not only literary recognition, but what at that time was apparently needed more—money for the commonest necessaries of life. Not only was he ill-clad, but, apparently, he often did not have sufficient food.

The cause of this destitution was undoubtedly the serious and repeated seizures by his hereditary malady. From this time on we know every important event of Poe's life, and both his misfortunes and his successes have been minutely described. We find running through these statements accounts of intercurrent attacks of sickness which incapacitated him for days or weeks, at first infrequent but slowly increasing in number and severity until we have a classical picture of typical dipsomania, with its accompanying depressions and mental abnormalities. These tell the story of the evil that pursued him and continually thwarted the best of intentions, and which made his life a series of financial struggles and failures.

Poe probably was not idle, and could we obtain all the facts, or the contemporary magazines that contained these "facts," we might find contributions that could rightly be attributed to Poe. As far as I know, Poe rarely signed his name to an article, and only occasionally used even his initials. It is certain that he later republished, and

preserved whatever he believed to be worthy of public recognition.

The marvelous mental transformation that certainly did take place between the publication of "Al Aaraaf," when Poe was twenty, and his appearance at the age of twenty-four, when he presented Kennedy with his "Tales of the Folio Club," cannot be accounted for by studying "The Best Hundred Authors," or that five-foot shelf so extensively and adroitly advertised. Exactly what hastened the flowering of the genius with which nature endowed him we do not know; but we must count the years between 1832 and 1840, when Poe, according to mortality tables, was still a very young man, as those of his full maturity. Other writers have developed as early and shown more pronounced maturity at the same age. "Tamerlane" can, in no way, compare with *Queen Mab*, which Shelley wrote when he was eighteen; yet these crude productions were the harbingers of greater achievements. There is necessarily some smoke and sputter before the rocket bursts with its scintillating brilliants.

In spite of the aid given Poe by his guardian, and the literary position gained by the "Tales of the Folio Club," his periodical seizures alienated many of his friends; and he was compelled to call on his literary discoverer, Kennedy, who thus writes:

> It is many years ago, I think perhaps as early as 1833 or 1834, that I found him in Baltimore in a state of starvation. I gave him clothes, free access to my table, and the use of horses for exercise whenever he chose, in fact brought him up from the very edge of despair.

The many indiscretions with which Poe is charged at this time, which changed some of his former friends into enemies were the result of his hereditary infirmity.

It must be remembered that dipsomania is not only periodical in its seizures, but that, even in its earliest manifestations, the patient is not responsible. His actions

may outrage friends who assume to be vicious those things which are in reality the result of disease.

Although Woodberry has covered the controverted life of Poe, and has fully—almost too fully—stated the acts on which Griswold based his defamatory statements, neither Woodberry nor any other biographer has given full consideration to the heredity, the obsessions, the compulsions, the frequently recurring spells of depression, and the nervous seizures that are a part of Poe's psychology, and on which we must base the explanation of those acts that have been so bitterly criticised.

For this reason I shall deal with Poe's literary work only as far as it exhibits mental disturbance. I must discuss the physical facts as they affected his somatic life and ended in his early death.

Undoubtedly the necessity for some form of mental excitement manifested itself early, as the records of the life Poe led at the University of Virginia and at West Point, as to both gambling and drinking, attest.

It is entirely possible that the manners and customs of those days, as well as the stimulants which, even as a child, were given Poe, early developed the appetite that was by inheritance a part of him. It is, in my judgment, certain that, even without this environment, there was a morbid predisposition which, sooner or later, would have overwhelmed him. His disappearance for two or three years and the fact that his changed facial appearance and his striking personality could not have been recently acquired, make me believe that those years were not passed faithfully and temperately serving in the army, as we know that Perry did serve. We must believe that during this time Poe rapidly developed intellectually, even if he deteriorated morally; and this necessarily indicates that, although there might have been periods of nervous disturbance, they were not continuous, and, as is the rule

in such cases, that this disease was slowly assuming the periodical character it usually manifests.

The first definite evidence we have of this progressive mental change is in a letter Poe wrote to Kennedy in 1835:

Excuse me, my dear Sir, if in this letter you find much incoherency. . . . My feelings at this moment are pitiable indeed. I am suffering under a depression of spirits such as I have never before suffered. I have struggled in vain against the influence of this melancholy—you will *believe* me, when I say that I am miserable in spite of the great improvement in my circumstances. I say that you will believe me, and for this simple reason, that a man who is writing for *effect* does not write *thus*. My heart is open before you—if it be worth reading, read it. I am wretched, and know not why. Console me,—for you can. But let it be quickly or it will be too late. Convince me that it is worth one's while—that it is at all necessary to live, and you will prove yourself indeed my friend. Persuade me to do what is right. I do not mean this. I do not mean that you should consider what I now write you a jest—oh, pity me! for I feel that my words are incoherent—but I will recover myself. You will not fail to see that I am suffering under depression of spirits which will ruin me should it be long continued. Write me then and quickly. Urge me to do what is right. Fail not—as you value your peace of mind hereafter.

These cries of agony are not unusual in the writings of men of genius, and an intimate study of their lives shows that many of them suffered from periodical depression and various mental obsessions, which at times amounted to absolute disease. It is a phase in the life history of many who possess this heredity, and some cannot resist the call.

Tolstoi in his "Confessions," John Stuart Mill in his "Autobiography," George Eliot, De Quincey, Shelley, and many other writers describe these critical periods.

Tolstoi tells us that his desires as to life and his views of death were reversed:

The thought of suicide came to me as naturally as had come before the ideas of improving life. That thought was so seductive that I had to use cunning against myself, lest I should rashly execute it. At such times, I, a happy man, hid a rope from myself, so that I

should not hang myself on a cross-beam between two closets in my room, and did not go out hunting with a gun in order not to be tempted by an easy way of doing away with myself.

. . . I had a good, loving and beloved wife, good children and a large estate. I was respected by my neighbors and friends, was praised by strangers and, without any self deception, could consider my name famous. With all that, I was not deranged or mentally unsound; on the contrary I was in the full command of my mental, and physical powers, such as I had rarely met with in men of my age, . . . and while in this condition I arrived at the conclusion that I could not live and, fearing death, I had to use cunning against myself, in order that I might not take my life. . . . Long ago has been told the Eastern Story about the traveller who in the Steppe is overtaken by an infuriated beast. Trying to save himself from this animal the traveller jumps into a waterless well but at the bottom he sees a dragon who opens his jaws in order to swallow him. And the unfortunate man does not dare climb out lest he perish from the infuriated beast, and does not dare jump down to the bottom of the well, lest he be devoured by the dragon, and so clutches the twig of a wild bush growing in the cleft of the wall and holds on to it. His hands grow weak and he feels that he must soon surrender to the peril that awaits him on either side; but he still holds on and sees two mice, one white and the other black, in even measure making a circle around the main trunk of the bush to which he is clinging, and nibbling at it on all sides. Now at any moment the bush will break and be torn off and he will fall into the dragon's jaws. The traveller sees this and knows he will inevitably perish, and while he is still clinging, he sees some drops of honey hanging on the leaves of the bush, and so reaches out to them, and with his tongue he licks the leaves. Just so I hold on to this branch of life, knowing that the dragon of death is inevitably waiting for me, ready to tear me into pieces, and I cannot understand why I have fallen on such suffering. And I try to lick that honey, which used to give me pleasure; but now it no longer gives me joy, and the white mouse and the black mouse, day and night, nibble at the branch to which I am holding. I clearly see the dragon and the honey is no longer sweet to me. I see only the inevitable dragon and the mice, and I am unable to turn my glance away from them. This is not a fable but a veritable, indisputable, comprehensible truth.

This is the cry of a lost soul, and I know nothing more pathetic, or that better describes the mental torture from

which such patients suffer. This desire for death is a psychological problem and admits of many solutions. Perhaps the best is that given by one of our greatest poets:

> Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
> No life that breathes with human breath
> Has ever truly long'd for death.
> 'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
> Oh Life, not Death, for which we pant,
> More life, and fuller, that I want.

Tennyson could not have written *The Two Voices* had he not passed through some such experience. It is the cry of a soul-obsessed melancholiac.

Shelley expresses his own abnormal sensations in a somewhat different manner:

> My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to such a degree of unnatural and keen excitement, that only to instance the organ of sight, I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission, is my condition.

John Stuart Mill, in his "Autobiography," thus describes a period of mental depression:

> I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to; . . . the state, I should think, in which converts to Methodism usually are, when smitten by their first 'conviction of sin.'
>
> In this frame of mind it occurred to me to put the question directly to myself: 'Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; . . . would this be a great joy and happiness to you?' And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, 'no!' At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. . . . I seemed to have nothing left to live for.
>
> At first I had hoped that the cloud would pass away of itself; but it did not. . . . I carried it with me into all companies, into all occupations. . . . For some months the cloud seemed to grow thicker and thicker. The lines in Coleridge's 'Dejection' exactly described my case:

'A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear,
A drowsy, stifled, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet or relief
In word, or sigh, or tear.'

In vain I sought relief from my favorite books, . . . I read them now without feeling, or with the accustomed feeling *minus* all its charm: . . . I was thus left stranded at the commencement of my voyage, with a well equipped ship and rudder but no sail. . . . I had had some gratification of vanity at too early an age; I had attained some distinction, and felt myself of some importance, before the desire of distinction and importance had grown into a passion. The fountains of vanity and ambitions seemed to have dried up within me, as completely as those of benevolence. These were the thoughts that mingled with the dry heavy dejection of the melancholy winter of 1826-27. . . . In all probability my case was not so peculiar as I had imagined it, and I doubt not that many others have passed through a similar state. . . . I frequently asked myself, if I could, or if I was bound to go on living, when life must be passed in this manner. I generally answered to myself, that I did not think I could possibly bear it beyond a year. When, however, not more than half that duration of time had elapsed, a small ray of light broke in upon my gloom. . . . Relieved from my ever present sense of irremediable wretchedness, I gradually found that the ordinary incidents of life could again give me some pleasure; that I could again find enjoyment, not intense, but sufficient for cheerfulness, in sunshine and sky, in books, in conversation, in public affairs; . . . thus the cloud gradually drew off, and I again enjoyed life; and though I had several relapses, some of which lasted for months, I never again was as miserable as I had been.

Mill was right in believing that many others had "passed through a similar state." But not all have the fortitude to bear it so patiently, and allow time to conquer so victoriously.

Borrow's peculiar style and morbid introspective imaginings necessarily had for a foundation this depressive, and, at times, absolutely disordered mental state due to a neurosis. His peculiar understanding of Peter the Welch preacher, the "Apple-woman," as well as many of his

other characters, must have had as a basis personal experience with these states of depression. As illustrating this state of mind his description of the "Horror" that came upon him in the dingle is unsurpassed.

Heaviness had suddenly come over me, heaviness of heart and of body also. . . . So there I sat in the dingle upon my stone, nerveless and hopeless: there I sat with my head leaning upon my hand, and began to cast anxious, unquiet looks about the dingle—the entire hollow was now in deep shade—I cast my eyes up; there was a golden gleam on the tops of the trees which grew toward the upper part of the dingle; but lower down all was gloom and twilight—yet when I first sat down on my stone, the sun was right over the dingle—so I must have sat a long, long time upon my stone. . . . Suddenly I started up, and could scarcely repress the shriek which was rising to my lips. Was it possible? Yes, all too certain; the evil one was upon me; the inscrutable horror which I had felt in my boyhood had once more taken possession of me. . . . I felt it gathering force, and making me more wholly its own. What should I do?—resist, of course; and I did resist. I grasped, I tore, and strove to fling it from me; but of what avail was my effort? I could only have got rid of it by getting rid of myself. I rushed among the trees, and struck at them with my bare fists, and dashed my head against them, but I felt no pain. How could I feel pain with the horror upon me! And then I flung myself on the ground, gnawed the earth, and swallowed it; and then I looked round; it was almost total darkness in the dingle, and the darkness added to my horror.

De Quincey, in a letter he wrote to Miss Mitford, attempts to make plain the mental agony from which he occasionally suffered:

No purpose could be answered by my vainly endeavouring to make intelligible for my daughters what I cannot make intelligible for myself—the undecipherable horror that night and day broods over my nervous system. One effect of this is to cause, at uncertain intervals, such whirlwinds of impatience as precipitate me violently, whether I will or not, into acts that would seem insanities, but are not such in fact, as my understanding is never under any delusion. Whatever I am writing suddenly becomes overspread with a dark

frenzy of horror. I am using words, perhaps, that are tautologic; but it is because no language can give expression to the sudden storm of frightful revelations opening upon me from an eternity not coming, but past and irrevocable. Whatever I may have been writing is suddenly wrapt, as it were, in one sheet of consuming fire—the very paper is poisoned to my eyes. I cannot endure to look at it, and I sweep it away into vast piles of unfinished letters, or inchoate essays begun and interrupted under circumstances the same in kind, though differing unaccountably in degree. . . . One inevitable suggestion at first arose to everybody consulted—viz., that it might be some horrible recoil from the long habit of using opium to excess. But this seems improbable for more reasons that one. 1st. Because previously to any *considerable* abuse of opium —viz., in the year 1812,—I suffered an unaccountable attack of nervous horror which lasted for five months, and went off in one night as unaccountably as it had first come on in one second of time. I was at that time perfectly well.

DeQuincey, Coleridge, Lamb, Swinburne, and others did not hesitate to use opium and other narcotizing drugs as well as stimulants to ease these prenatally induced pains.

Are there not mortals suffering from morbid mental states who inhabit a Kingdom undiscovered to most of us: those sensitive of soul and endowed with an abnormal perception and a spirit of unrest—a coterie of Sensitives who wear the fetters of heredity, and who can be neither measured by man-made standards, nor judged by prevailing customs, nor bound by our moral laws; who worship at a shrine more earthy natures can not perceive? It is possible that they are presided over by a priestess whose arch-votary thus describes her:

Hush! whisper whilst we talk of *her!*

Her kingdom is not large, or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers. Her head, turreted like that of Cybéle, rises almost beyond the reach of sight. She droops not; and her eyes rising so high *might* be hidden by distance. But, being what they are, they cannot be hidden; through the treble veil of crape which she wears, the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rests not for matins or vespers, for noon of day or noon of night, for ebbing or for flowing

tide, may be read from the very ground. She is the defier of God. She also is the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power; but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions; in whom the heart trembles and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. She moves with incalculable motions, bounding, and with a tiger's leaps. She carries no key; for, though coming rarely amongst men, she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And *her* name is *Mater Tenebrarum*,—Our Lady of Darkness.

Was it this same Kingdom that Poe glimpsed in his *Siope—A Fable?**

'Listen to *me*', said the Demon, as he placed his hand upon my head. 'There is a spot upon this accursed earth which thou hast never yet beheld. And if by any chance thou *hast* beheld it, it must have been in one of those vigorous dreams which come like the Simoon upon the brain of the sleeper who hath lain down to sleep among the forbidden sunbeams—among the sunbeams, I say, which slide from off the solemn columns of the melancholy temples in the wilderness. The region of which I speak is a dreary region in Lybia, by the borders of the river Zaire. And there is no quiet there, nor silence.

'The waters of the river have a saffron and sickly hue—and they flow not onwards to the sea, but palpitate forever and forever beneath the red eye of the sun with a tumultuous and convulsive motion. For many miles on either side of the river's oozy bed is a pale desert of gigantic water-lilies. They sigh one unto the other in that solitude, and stretch towards the heaven their long ghastly necks, and nod to and fro their everlasting heads. And there is an indistinct murmur which cometh out from among them like the rushing of subterrene water. And they sigh one unto the other. . . . And the tall primoeval trees rock eternally hither and thither with a crashing and mighty sound. And from their high summits, one by one, drop everlasting dews. And at their roots strange poisonous flowers lie writhing in perturbed slumber. And overhead, with a rustling and loud noise the grey clouds rush westwardly forever, until they roll, a cataract, over the fiery wall of the horizon. But there is no wind throughout the

*First Version Baltimore Book 1838.

heaven. And by the shores of the river Zaire there is neither quiet nor silence.

'It was night, and the rain fell; and, falling, it was rain, but, having fallen, it was blood. . . .

'And, all at once, the moon arose through the thin ghastly mist, and was crimson in color. And mine eyes fell upon a huge grey rock which stood by the shore of the river, and was litten by the light of the moon. And the rock was grey, and ghastly, and tall,—and the rock was grey. Upon its front were characters engraven in the stone; . . . and the characters were DESOLATION.

'And I looked upwards, and there stood a man upon the summit of the rock. . . . And the outlines of his figure were indistinct—but his features were the features of a Deity; for the mantle of the night, and of the mist, and of the moon, and of the dew, had left uncovered the features of his face. And his brow was lofty with thought, and his eye wild with care; and in the few furrows upon his cheek, I read the fables of sorrow, and weariness, and disgust with mankind, and a longing after solitude. . . . He looked down into the low unquiet shrubbery, and up into the tall primoeval trees, and up higher at the rustling heaven, and into the crimson moon. . . .

'And the man turned his attention from the heaven, and looked out upon the dreary river Zaire, and upon the yellow ghastly waters, and upon the pale legions of the water-lilies.

'Then I cursed the elements with the curse of tumult; and a frightful tempest gathered in the heaven where before there had been no wind, and the heaven became livid with the violence of the tempest —and the rain beat upon the head of the man—and the floods of the river came down—and the river was tormented into foam—and the water-lilies shrieked within their beds—and the forest crumbled before the wind —and the thunder rolled,—and the lightning fell—and the rock rocked to its foundation. . .

'Then I grew angry and cursed, with the curse of silence, the river, and the lilies,and the wind, and the forest,and the heaven, and the thunder, and the sighs of the water-lilies. And they became accursed and *were still.* And the moon ceased to totter in its pathway up the heaven—and the thunder died away—and the lightnings did not flash —and the clouds hung motionless—and the waters sunk to their level and remained—and the trees ceased to rock—and the water-lilies sighed no more—and the murmur was heard no longer from among them, nor any shadow of sound throughout the vast illimitable desert.

And I looked upon the characters of the rock, and they were changed —and the characters were SILENCE.

'And mine eyes fell upon the countenance of the man, and his countenance was wan with terror. And, hurriedly, he raised his head from his hand, and stood forth upon the rock, and listened. But there was no voice throughout the vast illimitable desert, and the characters upon the rock were SILENCE. And the man shuddered, and turned his face away, and fled afar off, and I beheld him no more.' . . .

Visions such as these are not for normal eyes, but may be viewed, though dimly, by those super-mortally hypermetropic, and who must pay the price for their genius-gifted inheritance. Many are overcome by these hereditary states of mental depressions and compulsions, and suicide ends their mental struggle.

Can we blame Poe if he did resort to alcohol and narcotics that he might numb such morbid mental anguish? This attack which he described was probably a characteristic seizure, and others followed with increasing frequency. We know that they occurred periodically and, occasionally, interrupted his work.

In 1835 Poe was made acting editor of the "Southern Literary Messenger," owned and managed by T. W. White. These lapses apparently interfered with his duties. They seriously discommoded White, and at times prevented the prompt issuance of the magazine. As early as 1835 White wrote him:

Would that it were in my power to unbosom myself to you in language such as I could, on the present occasion, wish myself master of. I cannot do it—and therefore must be content to speak to you in my plain way. That you are sincere in all your promises I firmly believe. But, Edgar, when you once again tread these streets, I have my fears that your resolves would fall through, and that you would again sip the juice, even till it stole away your senses. You have fine talents, Edgar,—and you ought to have them respected as well as yourself. Learn to respect yourself, and you will soon find that you are respected. Separate yourself from the bottle, and bottle companions, forever!

Apparently all went well for several months. In 1836 Poe wrote to his friend Kennedy, evidently with his former letter in mind:

> Mr. White is very liberal, and besides my salary of $520 pays me liberally for extra work, so that I receive nearly $800. Next year, that is at the commencement of the second volume, I am to get $1,000. Besides this I receive, from Publishers, nearly all new publications. My friends in Richmond have received me with open arms, and my reputation is extending—especially in the South. Contrast all this with those circumstances of absolute despair in which you found me, and you will see how great reason I have to feel grateful to God—and to yourself.

On May 16, 1836, Poe was married to Virginia, the daughter of his aunt Mrs. Clemm, who at that time was a child under the age of fourteen. He made a home with his aunt and she was his chief support ever after, as well as his Mother-in-fact. She nursed him through his seizures and aided him so intelligently and loyally that we must attribute to her the saving grace that repeatedly snatched Poe from the brink near to which he frequently and perilously trod. Without her ministering aid he could not have attained those literary heights that he now dominates.

Nothing definite is known as to the exact cause that led to Poe's expulsion from this little paradise. Until January, 1837, he acted as editor; and during all this time the "Messenger" increased in circulation and became recognized as one of the well edited magazines. White probably would have kept his promises and would have continued the association indefinitely, had not some serious intercurrent seizure prevented. While this cause is not on record, we know Poe's infirmity, and it is not difficult to deduce the reason. Poe during this time again suffered from depressive seizures and probably resorted to stimulants. White, in several letters he wrote to Lucian Minor, the later editor, thus refers to Poe:

Poe is now in my employ—not as editor. He is unfortunately rather dissipated—and therefore I can place very little reliance upon him. His disposition is quite amiable. He will be of some assistance to me in proofreading—at least I hope so.

A few days later he again wrote:

Poe has flew the track already. His habits were not good. He is in addition a victim of melancholy. I should not be at all astonished to hear that he had been guilty of suicide.

From these letters it appears that Poe was unfitted for work, but whether this was due to the fact that "Poe has flew the track," or to his depression, which might in time cause him to be "guilty of suicide," or to a combination of these conditions which were the result of his morbid inheritance, is an immaterial matter. The evil predisposition was slowly asserting itself and Poe was no longer entirely master of his actions; he was swayed by his compelling neurosis.

Kennedy states:

Poe was irregular, eccentric and querulous and soon gave up his place.

Poe in writing to Snodgrass as to his habits at this time said:

For a brief period, while I resided at Richmond and edited the 'Messenger' I certainly did give way, at long intervals, to the temptation held out by the spirit of Southern conviviality.

My sensitive temperament could not stand an excitement which was an everyday matter to my companions. In short, it sometimes happened that I was completely intoxicated. For some days after each excess I was completely prostrated and invariably confined to my bed.

It is not probable that this separation was voluntary on Poe's part, inasmuch as he accepted articles for the "Messenger" several days after his connection had ceased, without referring to the fact that he was no longer in editorial charge. He merely said that his delay in answering was due to "ill health and a weight of varying and haras-

sing business." Apparently Poe still hoped to resume his former connection. Though there was no one to take his position, and he certainly had no plans for the future, he resigned from the "Messenger" in January, 1837, leaving one of his stories unfinished, and issued this farewell note:

> Mr. Poe's attention being called in another direction, he will decline, with this present number, the editorial duties of the 'Messenger.' . . . With the best wishes to the magazine and to its few foes as well as to its many friends, he is now desirous of bidding all parties a peaceable farewell.

White recognized the disease from which Poe suffered and sympathized with the victim. At the same time he realized the impossibility of holding Poe to routine work.

There was developed during this time the marvelous critical faculty that gave the "Messenger" the right to be ranked with the metropolitan journals of New York and Philadelphia, and which established Poe as a literary critic of the very highest authority. Time has fully vindicated his criticisms of the great and the near-great; and many names are known to us, not because Griswold and Duyckinck included them in their anthologies and the "Encyclopedia of American Literature," but because they have been pilloried by Poe in his "Marginalia" and "Literati." It is true that many of these criticisms were unnecessarily caustic.

It may be admitted that at times Poe did go beyond legitimate criticism and apparently he used this method to convey his own theories of composition and his rejection of the prevailing modes that disfigured our early literature. Fully to appreciate the enormity of these literary crimes one must read the "Lady's Book," the "Gentleman's," the "Burton's," and the "Graham's" of those days; the "Mirror" with Willis' *Pencillings by the Way* as well as less well-known publications such as "Columbian Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine," "Sartain's,"

"Union Magazine," the "American Museum" and other contemporary publications with their reviews and trashy stories and poems. They are, of all *Americana*, the most difficult to collect and, when found, least repay the search, except as they contain Poe contributions. Most of these periodicals have been dead these many years; and the stones marking their resting places are so overgrown with the moss of oblivion that soon it will be impossible to find them. Even the "Southern Literary Messenger" and "Broadway Journal," to each of which Poe's contributions gave distinct literary value, have perished for lack of appreciation, so that complete files have become bibliographical rarities.

Poe's critical faculty was such that, whatever the cost, however hard he tried to soften his literary judgments (at times Poe did fawn when the wolf pressed him too ferociously), sooner or later his real opinions must have utterance.

Poe's mind was elementary and it saw only that which was essentially true. It was not the retort of the chemist that transforms the atoms of the elements into the molecule, completely changing form, color, and substance. It was rather the primitive alembic of the alchemist and, with all his effort, Poe could not change the zinc and copper atoms into a new chemical combination. It remained brass and he detected and so described it. He could not make dross into gold, but he almost succeeded where the alchemist failed—changing the leaden weights that held him down into a glorious aureola. However hard he tried to analyze and render homogeneous the incongruous mass, sooner or later, as he warmed to his work, the dregs and impurities of the mixture were dissolved, and out of the *capital* of his alembic poured the liquid essence of Truth.

He could reproduce only what, to his mind, actually ex-

isted, and it came forth so surcharged with literary wrath that only the scorched victim could dissent.

For this reason many of Poe's contemporaries held him in bitter memory and were easily persuaded to believe the evil reports that were circulated, although their basis was never investigated or properly understood.

We know nothing of Poe's alcoholic habits between his departure from Richmond and the commencement of his association with W. E. Burton in the conduct of the "Gentleman's Magazine," in July, 1839. This is probably due to the fact that he occupied no editorial or other responsible position, and was accountable only to a loving and forgiving wife and mother. That there were long periods of sobriety, and that his conduct caused no remark, is established by contemporary evidence, although it is probable that his periodical seizures continued.

Within a few months after his association with Burton we find letters showing that these attacks were interfering again with his editorial duties. The methodical, practical Burton could not sympathize with what he believed to be Poe's melancholy and irritable temperament; and, even when justified, he did not approve of Poe's critical severity.

> I am not trammelled by any vulgar consideration of expediency; I would rather lose money than by such undue severity to wound the feelings of a kind hearted and honorable man.

This was in a letter of expostulation Burton wrote to Poe, occasioned apparently by some serious misunderstanding, the exact nature of which is not known. Poe, on the other hand, held Burton in supreme contempt, not because he was an actor, but because of his literary pretensions.

Evidently Burton had made some statement, possibly using the word "drunkard" in describing Poe's alcoholic excesses; for, in a letter that Poe wrote Dr. Snodgrass,

soon after this time, from which I have already quoted, he says:

> I would institute a suit, forthwith, for his personal defamation of myself. He would be unable to prove the truth of his allegations. I could prove their falsity and their malicious intent by witnesses who, seeing me at all hours of every day, would have the best right to speak—I mean Burton's own clerk, Morell, and the compositors of the printing office. I should obtain damages. But, on the other hand, I have never been scrupulous as to what I have said of him. I have always told *him* to his face, and everybody else, that I looked upon him as a blackguard and a villain. This is notorious. If I sue, he sues; you see how it is. . . . I would take it as an act of kindness—not to say *justice* on your part, if you would see the gentleman to whom you spoke and ascertain with accuracy all that may legally avail me, what and when were the words he used. . . .
>
> You are a physician, and I presume no physician can have difficulty in detecting a *drunkard* at a glance. You are, moreover, a literary man well read in morals. You will never be led to believe that I could write what I daily write *as* I write it, were I what this villain would induce those who know me not, to believe. In fine, I pledge you before God, the solemn word of a gentleman, that I am temperate even to rigor.

The statement which follows, that "nothing stronger than water ever passed my lips," could refer only to his period of sobriety during the time that he was editor of Burton's "Gentleman's Magazine."

This passage bears evidence of having been written immediately after one of Poe's attacks, while his brain was still sore from congestion due to over-indulgence, and when he was not altogether responsible for his actions or his speech, as is frequently the case following such seizures.

Between these attacks the best of resolutions are made, and nothing can induce dipsomaniacs to drink; nor have they the slightest realization of their true condition or the danger of relapse. Such patients hotly resent criticism of any kind, and any reference to their habits only angers them. Their one cry is that they have completely reformed,

so why discuss a matter that is definitely and unalterably settled? In their own opinion their cure is complete and permanent.

In no sense can Poe be considered either a drunkard or a toper: for the disease is periodical in its seizures and, between the attacks, such unfortunates are most abstemious, the avoidance of alcohol being as characteristic as is the uncontrollable desire for some form of stimulant or narcotic when their *nerve-storm* does break. Poe, in denying the allegations, was self-deceived. It is a peculiarity of such persons not only to believe that they have completely recovered, but also to resent any question as to permanency. A marked example of this was the functional heart disturbance Poe at times exhibited, and which was the basis for Mrs. Shew's prognosis of Poe's early death because of an organically diseased heart. After the tenth beat of Poe's heart there was an intermission, and the discovery of this intermittent action caused her profound worry. Evidently these fears were communicated to Poe, for the doggerel that he wrote was probably based on this "diagnosis." Nature is a queer old mother, and seems to have the art of concealing from her victims the most hopeless and incurable of her diseases. On the other hand she magnifies and exaggerates many of the symptoms that are purely hysterical.

It is possible for the wise physician to base his diagnosis on the psychology of such patients. When one comes complaining of heart disease, counting his pulse, and fearing death from heart failure, I feel certain that I have to deal with a neurasthenic whose heart is organically sound, but whose pneumogastric nervous system is deranged, and that a disturbed stomach is the organ involved. The best evidence I can have that persons are not insane is their fear that insanity is developing; or that they have not consumption when they magnify the slightest bronchitis

into this dread disease. On the other hand, when it is apparent to all that day by day they are wasting away, such patients cannot be made to realize the gravity of their condition, and frequently buoy the hopes of their friends by this courageous attitude. *Spes Phthisici* is a medical truism. I rarely if ever converse with an insane person who believes that he is insane. It is pitiful to watch a paretic who builds his aircastles, dreams his dreams of untold wealth and supreme power, yet never realizes his loss of reflex control which makes him a source of disgust and loathing to all who must meet him and minister to his necessities.

In spite of the fact that Poe resented what he believed to be the unjust treatment he had received, Burton did actively interest himself in securing for Poe an editorial connection with a new magazine. This was a consolidation of the "Gentleman's" with the "Casket" and was to be issued as "Graham's." Poe, however, had reached that period in his morbid mental life when he was not, at all times, responsible for his utterances, and there were periods when he no longer possessed the ability to discriminate between criticism kindly meant and utterances really slanderous.

Although Poe had left Burton voluntarily and for the purpose of establishing a magazine of his own, this intention was abandoned probably because there was an intercurrent attack of his old malady. Apparently he was incapacitated several weeks, and, on his recovery, was employed by George Graham as associate editor of the new magazine. Long periods of sobriety must have followed these seizures, for much good work in the way of stories, poems, and critical reviews by Poe now appeared, and Graham's own testimony fully establishes the kindly relations that existed between them.

Undoubtedly there were lapses that caused Poe occas-

ionally to neglect his editorial duties. Once, on returning to his office after several days' absence, he found Griswold occupying his chair. It is probable Graham intended this substitution to be only a temporary arrangement. Poe bitterly resented it, as, in these later years, he did most things when crossed, and refused all further editorial association. Yet he and Graham remained on friendly terms.

Poe's whole ambition and efforts were now centered on establishing a new magazine to be known as the "Stylus," and this idea became an obsession.

About this same time he had under consideration a government position in Philadelphia, where he expected to publish his magazine. He went to Washington with the purpose of securing subscribers for his new periodical, and also of obtaining the President's sanction for this political appointment, hoping to exert influence through Tyler's literary sons.

He might have succeeded in this had there not been a return of his inherited "evil possession." A friend, F. W. Thomas, who became alarmed at his condition, because he feared Poe might injure his political prospects, wrote:

> He arrived here a few days since. On the first evening he seemed somewhat excited, having been overpersuaded to take some port wine. On the second day he kept pretty steady, but since then he has been, at intervals, quite unreliable. He exposes himself here to those who may injure him very much with the President, and thus prevent us from doing for him what we wish to do and what we can do if he is himself again in Philadelphia.
>
> . . . Under all circumstances of the case, I think it advisable for you to come and see him safely back to his home.

Poe's own explanation is as follows:

> I arrived here in perfect safety, and *sober*, about half past four . . . I went immediately home, took a warm bath and supper, and then went to Clarke's. He thought by Dow's epistle that I must not only be dead but buried. . . . I told him what had been agreed on—that I was a little sick, and that Dow, knowing I had been, in times past,

given to spreeing upon an extensive scale, had become unduly alarmed, etc., etc.,—that when I found that he had written, I thought it best to come home.

Thomas, who was an office holder in Washington, and who had suggested to Poe that he make this application, gives some interesting details as to certain phases of Poe's sickness:

If he took but one glass of weak wine, or beer, or cider, the Rubicon of the cup had been passed with him, and it almost always ended in excess and sickness. But he fought against the propensity as hard as ever Coleridge fought against it and I am inclined to believe after his experience and suffering, if he could have gotten office with a fixed salary that he would have redeemed himself, at least at this time. The accounts of his derelictions in this respect after I knew him were very much exaggerated. I have seen men who drank bottles of wine to Poe's wine glass, who yet escaped all imputation of intemperance. His was one of those temperaments whose only safety is in total abstinence. He suffered terribly after any indiscretion.

For several years no one was associated more closely with Poe than Dr. English. His statement is:

His offenses against sobriety were committed at irregular intervals. He had not that physical constitution that would permit him to be a regular drinker. He was not even a frequent drinker when I knew him.

Another friend writes:

I, the most innocent of divinity students, at that time (1847) while walking with Poe, and feeling thirsty, pressed him to take a glass of wine with me. He declined but finally compromised by taking a glass of ale with me. Almost instantly a great change came over him. Previously engaged in an indescribably eloquent conversation he became as if paralyzed, and, with compressed lips and fixed glassy eyes, returned, without uttering a word, to the house which we were visiting. For hours the strange spell hung over him. He seemed a changed being, as if stricken by some peculiar phase of insanity.

Poe in a letter to Eleveth (February, 1848,) makes the following explanation, which appears to have been written

in good faith, and at the time it was written represented his own estimate of his physical health:

My habits are rigorously abstemious, and I omit nothing of the natural regimen necessary for health: i. e. I rise early, eat moderately, drink nothing but water, and take abundant and regular exercise in the air. But this is my private life—my studious and literary life—and, of course, escapes the eye of the world. The desire for society comes upon me only when I have become excited by drink. Then *only* I go—that is, at these times only I *have been* in the practice of going among my friends; who seldom, or, in fact, never having seen me unless excited, take it for granted I am always so. . . . But enough of this; the causes which maddened me to the drinking point are no more, and I am done drinking forever.

The same old cry!

Occasionally one of Poe's biographers confuses the condition of being "drunk," by which usually is meant physical paralysis accompanied by mental confusion, with that more serious condition of forgetfulness or mental alienation, which occasionally the mildest stimulant will produce, or that still more subtle and less easily explained mental abnormality manifested by a complete change of personality. There is much evidence that Poe could take large quantities of stimulants without producing physical drunkenness.

Pierre Janet, M. D. of Paris, one of our most recent writers on Alcoholism regarded as a disease, asserts:

It is not sufficient to say that an alcoholic is a man who drinks alcoholic beverages, nor to add that he partakes of such beverages in large quantities and often. We must not fail to distinguish between alcoholism and excess in drinking. An ordinary drunken man is not an alcoholic. He may possibly become one but he is not yet one. He does not present the moral defects of an alcoholic. He is not subject to the same accidents. He is not so dangerous to future generations. Drunkeness consists in a disorder of actions and of idea-association, which is rapidly evoked by the absorption of alcohol. A drunken man is a person whose mental condition was normal but who, under the influence of alcohol, rapidly enters an

abnormal state. Nothing of the kind takes place as regards the alcoholic. On the contrary he may not become intoxicated. . . . Alcoholism is not an intoxication of an accidental nature, which will disappear and leave no traces if alcohol is suppressed. We are dealing with an alteration of the mind—a mental disease—antecedent to the present absorption of alcohol and in one sense independent of alcohol. This antecedent alteration explains the role that the absorption of alcohol plays and also the intense craving that alcoholics manifest for their particular form of poison.

After dipsomania has reached that stage where organic changes have taken place in the coverings of the brain, the slightest alcoholic stimulation may produce profound disturbance, morally and mentally. One drink may change the whole moral atmosphere and produce a state of mental irresponsibility, even when there is no corresponding physical change apparent. Occasionally, even without any stimulant, there may develop an abnormal mental condition, the so-called change in personality which we so freely discuss without any real knowledge as to how it does occur, further than that there is a changed mental life. Things are said and done while in this condition that are totally opposed to the speech and conduct ordinarily characterizing these patients, and, on recovery, they may have no memory of what has occurred.

After this failure to establish either himself or his journal, Poe left Philadelphia and took up his residence in New York. There he was employed by N. P. Willis for detail work on the "Mirror." The next eighteen months he led a more or less abstemious life, although there is a record of at least two relapses.

Poe's reputation was now fully established and he was received, and was visited, by literary New York. In consequence we have many intimate details of his life and surroundings both from visitors at Fordham and from those who met him in the *salons* of those days.

Although Poe's employment on the "Mirror" was of but

three months' duration, its petty details and necessarily regular hours were most trying. With all its requirements, however, Poe most faithfully complied. This connection gave Willis a first hand and intimate acquaintance with Poe which he later used in refutation of the memoir Griswold published.

Poe's connection with the "Mirror" ceased in February, 1845, at which time there was published, both in the "Mirror" and in the "American Whig Review" Poe's most famous poem, *The Raven*. This poem is probably better known to the world than any other in English literature. While it is possible that had it not been for *The Raven* Poe's name would have meant no more than that of Willis, Paulding, or others of the early American writers, this poem has been his redemption and finally his vindication.

We must judge Poe by his works rather than by the hasty and ill-natured conclusions of certain of his contemporaries. He cannot be held responsible for his hereditary seizures and ought to be judged leniently. He should be classed with those equally unfortunate in the matter of heredity or habit. Lamb, Shelley, Swinburne, Coleridge and De Quincey, as associates, would have constituted a literary Aidenn which even Poe, solitary that he was, might have welcomed. Surely his life will bear a far fuller investigation than will certain of those I have mentioned.

It has been to me a cause of wonder that a single poem or story has not only established a literary reputation, but has transmitted the writer's name to posterity in some definite way. The name of Gray is known to us, not by reason of his heavy and dull poetical essays, but by the *Elegy* which, in a peculiar way, appeals both to the understanding and the heart. Shelley's name might have attracted the attention of the *literati* even without *The Skylark* and *The Cloud*—to me the most beloved of all poems: few would have had the patience to search for the

beauties of his long poems. Coleridge might have ranked as an essayist or monologist, but suppress the *Ancient Mariner* and his name would have been unknown to the great majority of readers.

That stanza:

> Westward the course of empire takes its way;
> The four first acts already passed,
> A fifth shall close the drama with the day;
> Time's noblest offspring is the last.

has given a substance that is real and a reputation that is permanent to a transcendental philosopher who taught the non-existence of things material. Neither as a poet nor as a scientist has Berkeley earned the distinction that now immortalizes his name. His only contribution to science was his elaborate treatise on "Tar Water" as a cure of human ills, ranking in scientific value with Digby's "Weapon Salve"; nor can we recognize him as a poet, for the verses containing these lines were his only contribution to literature and faulty as they are in prosody the preceding lines are worse. Nor does he deserve a reputation as a philosopher, for his "Dialogues" and his "Principles of Human Knowledge" have become a part of

> That dust of Systems and of Creeds

which clog and cumber the world with worthless theories.

Even though this stanza refers to a college Berkeley was attempting to establish in Bermuda, BERKELEY has been selected as the name of my own *alma mater:* a greater honor could have been conferred on no man or a more noble monument erected in his memory.

It was about this time, through their mutual friend, Lowell, that Charles F. Briggs and Poe met. Briggs thus records his first impression of Poe:

> I like Poe exceedingly well. Mr. Griswold has told me shocking bad stories about him, which his whole demeanor contradicts. . . . I have

always strangely misunderstood Poe, from thinking him one of the Graham and Godey species, but I find him as different as possible.

In March, 1845, Briggs, who had established "The Broadway Journal," associated Poe as joint editor. In the beginning all was harmonious and Briggs again wrote:

The Rev. Mr. Griswold of Philadelphia told me some damnable lies about him, but a personal acquaintance has induced me to think highly of him.

That Poe possessed a most pleasing personality when he was normal and responsible for his actions, there is much evidence; but there were times, and these periods were now recurring more frequently, when his mental obsession dominated.

From this time on Poe's creative work practically ceased; in its place there appeared a spirit of carping criticism and an intolerance of the work of others.

To this period belongs "The Longfellow War," which reflects Poe's abnormal mental state. While contributing to the "Mirror" Poe passed the following criticism on Longfellow's "Waif":

Is it infected with a moral taint—or is this a mere freak of our fancy? We shall be pleased if it be so; but there does appear in this little volume a very careful avoidance of all American poets who may be supposed to interfere with the claims of Mr. Longfellow. These men Mr. Longfellow can continuously *imitate* (is that the word?) and never yet incidentally commend.

Poe—a normal Poe—could not have insinuated what this passage evidently does imply, viz: that Longfellow was making use of Poe's work as a model for the poems contained in this volume; for, to Poe's ego, there was no other "American poet." This criticism gave great offense to Longfellow's friends; yet Longfellow did not resent it, and thus dismisses the matter:

The harshness of his criticisms I have never attributed to anything but the irritation of a sensitive nature, chafed by some indefinite sense of wrong.

Poe formerly had declared that he regarded Longfellow as the greatest of our poets; and, while posterity has not placed him among the first, certainly he ranks high, and deserves the recognition he has received.

One "Outis" answered Poe's criticism in a style equally bitter, and the war was on—one that delighted Poe, for, owing to the morbid state which was developing, he enjoyed the fight. His excited brain took fire, and, what possibly was at first a passing thought became a deep conviction. Poe seriously attempted to prove that Longfellow was a plagiarist and an imitator.

This "war" was continued in the "Broadway Journal." Briggs, while not approving, wrote:

> Poe is a monomaniac on the subject of Plagiarism, and I thought it best to allow him to ride his hobby to death at the outset and be done with it.

It was not the general charge of plagiarism that makes me believe that the line of sane criticism had been passed, for Poe always posed as an expert in detecting similarities. That he could have believed, as he appeared to believe, that Longfellow was imitating him—and evidently the grievance was a personal one—is not consonant with Poe's literary acumen.

Although it is probable that Poe and Longfellow never met, there was a literary understanding between them and letters passed. I have in my possession a letter dated May 19, 1841, from Longfellow to Poe, evidently written in answer to one that he had received from Poe, the contents of which are not known. The letter is slightly defective, caused by Longfellow's signature having been cut out.

> Dear Sir:
>
> Your favor of the 3rd inst. with the two Nos. of the magazine reached me [here a] day or two ago, which will account [for my delay and the fact that] a more speedy answer was not returned.

You are mistaken in supposing that 'you are not favorably known to me.' On the contrary, all that I have read from your pen, has inspired me with a high idea of your power, and I think you are destined to stand among the first romance-writers of the country, if such be your aim.

Very truly yours,

Poe's answer to this is among those included in Harrison's "Letters of Poe." The context of this Poe letter makes it evident that Poe had written Longfellow requesting contributions to "Graham's". Although this paragraph containing Longfellow's declination must have been destroyed by this autograph vandal, the remaining portion is interesting because it shows mutual appreciation. Longfellow's commendation of Poe's stories, ignoring his poems at this time equally well known, might have been the origin of the "Longfellow War."

Another equally strange vagary was a judgment on a poet and a poem, which is so singularly absurd that it could not have emanated from a rational brain. Neither the poem nor the poet ever would have been resurrected had it not been for Poe's eloquent and sincere eulogium. The poet's name was Horne, and the poem was called "Orion." Poe wrote a criticism containing the following appreciation:

It is our deliberate opinion that, in all that regards the loftiest and holiest attributes of true poetry, Orion has never been excelled. Indeed we feel strongly inclined to say that it has never been equalled.

Comparing it to Milton's description of hell, Poe says that Milton is:

Altogether inferior in graphic effect, in originality, in expression, in the true imagination. 'Orion' will be admitted by every man of genius to be one of the noblest, if not the very noblest poetical work of the age.

Spurred to investigation by so ardent and so laudatory a critique, and possibly abashed by the fact that I never even had heard of, much less read, this poem that out-Miltoned Milton—supposing that nothing more dull

had ever been written—I eagerly searched for some trace of either the book or the author, but they seemed to be equally dead. Only Captain Brown's "Conchology" furnished me with a keener chase. Finally the book-hunt was successful, and I found the long-sought item:—not only found it, but in its original state autographed and inscribed to Douglas Jerrold; and, as an added indication of the author's capacity and literary acumen, there was printed, on the title page, the announcement "PRICE ONE FARTHING." Evidently Horne was no profiteer, yet he probably asked all that it was worth. The volume was uncut and apparently unopened; certainly it remains unread. From the few passages which I scanned, I am certain that in one sense Poe's comparison was just, in spite of his mistaken judgment. It is said that this price of one farthing was placed on it by Horne, in derision of the slight value in which epic poetry was held. The price, not the value, has greatly increased.

Possibly the particular passage selected by Poe that rivaled the God-like fight between the Devils and Angels is this:

> Them, quickly joined
> Their head in this destruction, and ere night,
> Huge forms, ferocious, mighty in the dawn,
> When hoar rime glistened on each hairy shape,
> Nought fearing, swift, brimful of raging life,
> Lay stiffening in black pools of jellied gore.
> Nor with the day ceased their tremendous task,
> But all night long Orion led the way
> Through moonless passes to most secret lairs,
> Where in their deep abodes fierce monsters crouched,—
> Dragons and sea-beasts and compounded forms,—
> And in the pitchy blackness madly huddling,
> Midst deafening yells and hisses they were slain.

This is not by any means the worst. I select at random:

> Never renew thy vision, passionate lover—
> Heart-rifled maiden—nor the hope pursue,

If once it vanish from thee; but believe,
'Tis better thou should'st rue this sweet loss ever
Than newly grieve, or risk another chill
On false love's icy river, which betraying
With mirrors bright to see, and voids beneath,
Its broken spell should find no faith in thee.

A normal Poe was too capable a critic to have passed such judgment. He had no reason for giving this favorable opinion had he not believed that it was deserved. His judgment must have been perverted.

The relationship, begun so happily between Poe and Briggs lasted only a few months. There were disagreements between Briggs and his publishers, probably owing to the circumstance that the "Journal" did not pay expenses, and in July, 1845, Poe assumed the editorship.

According to Briggs:

Poe got on a drunken spree, and conceived the idea that I had not treated him well, for which he had no other grounds than my having loaned him money and persuaded Brisco to carry on 'The Journal' himself.

While this may be true, as between Briggs and Poe Brisco preferred Poe. After a week's suspension, "The Broadway Journal" reappeared with Poe as sole editor. Poe's life-time ambition was realized, and the goal was reached for which so long he had striven. Unfortunately success came too late.

Although Poe tried hard for his ideal and attempted to fashion "The Broadway Journal" into the arbiter of matters literary, and make it the critical authority of which he was at one time capable, his mental deterioration had progressed to such an extent that he was no longer able either to produce original work or to judge fairly the work of others. "The Journal" under his management, reproduced many of his stories and a few of his poems, but his reviews apparently had lost much of their critical

value; as in the case of the Longfellow war, which he continued as long as he could find anyone to reply to him, they showed bias.

Neither mentally, nor temperamentally, was Poe fitted for a Poet Laureate. He could not write on command and, with him, a poem was a matter of inspiration. It was not in a spirit of derision that he read *Al Aaraaf* before a Boston audience, when requested to write a new poem for this occasion. He attempted one and failed. To him composition came slowly and the poems that make his name known to us were the result of some inner fire and undiscoverable compulsion that precipitated into being an immortal melody. As a rule the conception was immaculate; only occasionally could the inception be traced and normal gestation be demonstrated. It was with full realization that Poe asserted: "To coin one's brain into silver, at the nod of a master, is to my thinking the hardest task in the world." During the last four years of his life he produced little that has added to his reputation. One poem *Tne Bells* was slowly elaborated and two, most remarkable for their inspirational and melodic cadences, *Ulalume* and *Annabel Lee*, were published but when they were written, or how long they had remained unpublished, we do not know.

It is apparent that Poe's poetic faculty remained, and his mastery of words and rhythm lasted beyond his logical faculties. In writing to Evert A. Duyckinck in November, 1845, he said:

> For the first time during two months, I find myself entirely myself—dreadfully sick and depressed but still myself. I seem to have wakened from some horrible dream, in which all was confusion and suffering. I really believe I have been mad—but indeed I had abundant reason to be so.

It was during this time that Poe had the memorable interview with Lowell, and, in spite of the kindly feeling their

long correspondence had engendered, each seems to have been disappointed in the other. Lowell later wrote:

I saw Poe only once . . . I suppose there are many descriptions of him. He was small: his complexion of what I should call a clammy white; fine, dark eyes, and fine head, very broad at the temples, but receding sharply from the brows backwards. His manner was rather formal, even pompous, but I have the impression that he was rather soggy with drink—not tipsy—but as if he had been holding his head under a pump to cool it.

It is probable that Poe's facial appearance had changed, as the result of alcoholic poisoning, and that he was not at that time possessed of the expression of nobility that had impressed many who attempted descriptions of him.

And Poe's own impression of Lowell was not by any means flattering:

He called to see me the other day, but I was very much disappointed in his appearance as an intellectual man. He was not half the noble looking man that I expected to see.

This interview is also referred to in a letter Mrs. Clemm wrote Lowell after Poe's death:

How much I wish I could see you! how quickly I could remove your wrong impression of my darling Eddie! The day you saw him in New York, *he was not himself*. Do you not remember that I never left the room? Oh! if you only knew his bitter sorrow when I told him how unlike himself he was while you were here, you would have pitied him! He always felt particularly anxious to possess your approbation. If he spoke unkindly of you (as you say he did) rely on it, he did not know what he was talking.

Willis thus pictures Poe:

He becomes a desk,—his beautiful head showing like a statuary embodiment of Discrimination; his accent drops like a knife through water, and his style is so much purer and clearer than the pulpit commonly gets or requires that the effect of what he says, besides other things, pampers the ears.

While Willis mixes his metaphors and his similes are crude, what he means to express is a remarkable tribute

for one writer to pay another, especially when that other is a close acquaintance.

Another familiar thus describes him:

The exquisitely chiseled features, the habitual but intellectual melancholy, the clear pallor of the complexion, and the calm eye like the molten stillness of a slumbering volcano, composed a countenance of which this portrait is but the skeleton.

There must have been some ground for these eulogies.

In October, 1845, Poe assumed full charge of "The Broadway Journal", and it was in November of the same year that he wrote the letter to Duyckinck.

In January, 1846, the following notice announced the close of his last effort. It was the end.

VALEDICTORY

Unexpected engagements demanding my whole attention, and the objects being fulfilled, so far as regards myself personally, for which 'The Broadway Journal' was established, I now, as its editor, bid farewell—as cordially to foes as to friends.

EDGAR A. POE.

Only those who, in their old age, have experienced failure, knowing that their last opportunity as well as their capacity for work has passed, can comprehend to the full the heartbreak in these stereotyped phrases.

This was Poe's last attempt to do serious work worthy of his genius. For the next four years, till death mercifully freed him, his life was one unbroken series of disasters. It was at this time that his wife's sickness gave evidence of her fast approaching end, and penury pinched him so hard that even his poor mother was compelled to ask for assistance. That there was abject poverty—want beyond human endurance—is evident from the reports of those who visited Fordham at that time.

The cottage had an air of gentility and neatness that must have been lent to it by the presence of its inmates. So neat, so poor, so un-

furnished, and yet so charming a dwelling I never saw. The floor of the kitchen was white as wheaten flour. A table, a chair, and a little stove that it contained seemed to furnish it completely.

Another visitor, describing this home, thus pictures Mrs. Poe:

I saw her in her bed-chamber. Everything here was so neat, so purely clean, so scant and poverty stricken, that I saw the poor sufferer with such a heartache as the poor feel for the poor. There was no clothing on the bed, which was of straw, but a snow-white counterpane and sheets. The weather was cold and the sick lady had the dreadful chills that accompany the hectic fever of consumption. She lay on her straw bed, wrapped in her husband's great-coat, with a large tortoise cat in her bosom. The wonderful cat seemed conscious of her great usefulness. The coat and the cat were the only means of warmth of the poor sufferer, except as the husband held her hands, and her mother her feet.

Friends of Poe made a public appeal and money was raised to tide over the threatened starvation. Only a knowledge of Poe's sensitive nature and high-strung spirit could make us know the humiliation he must have suffered because of this public appeal; yet it was to this Griswold sneeringly alluded when, quoting a letter Poe wrote Willis in which he protested against "the concerns of my family being thus pitilessly thrust before the public," he said in his memoir:

This was written for effect. He had not been ill a great while nor dangerously at all.

Fortunately Poe was for many weeks too sick to protest, and his friends were allowed to care for him.

It is certain that there were a few occasions when Poe gave striking evidence of his disturbed mental state, that was plain to all his intimate associates. His friend Willis says:

He left us ['The Mirror'] by his own wish alone, and it was one day soon after, that we saw him in the condition to which we refer. He came into our office with his usual gait and manner, and, with no

symptom of ordinary intoxication, he talked like a man insane. Perfectly self-possessed in all other respects, his brain and tongue were evidently beyond his control. We learned afterward that the least stimulus—a single glass of wine—would produce this effect on Mr. Poe and that rarely as these instances of easy aberration of caution and mind occurred, he was liable to them, and while under their influence, voluble and personally self-possessed but neither sane nor responsible.

This change in Poe, the so-called double personality, is variously explained, for it is not necessarily caused by alcohol. In some way not understood the subconscious self is involved and, by reason of a morbid change, dominates. Beyond a certain point it becomes a pathological change, and one suffering from it cannot be held responsible. The nervous diathesis is usually present as the basis of this mental complex.

Mrs. Shew, his friend and his nurse, kept a diary from which John H. Ingram made the following extract:

I made my diagnosis, and went to the great Dr. Mott with it; I told him that at best, when Mr. Poe was well, his pulse beat only ten regular beats, after which it suspended, or intermitted (as doctors say). I decided that in his best health he had lesion of one side of the brain, and as he could not bear stimulants or tonics, without producing insanity, I did not feel much hope that he could be raised up from brain fever brought on by extreme suffering of mind and body.

Mrs. Shew again states that on Poe's failing to return home, they found that he had taken a room and slept for twelve hours; and that, on awakening, he had little or no memory of what had taken place during this period. Again she deduces the medical opinion:

This showed that his mind was injured, nearly gone out for the want of food and from disappointment. He had not been drinking, and had been only a few hours from home. Evidently his vitality was low and he was nearly insane. While he slept we studied his pulse, and found the same symptoms we had noticed before. I called in Dr. Francis (the old man was odd but very skillful) who was one of our neighbors. His words were, 'He has heart disease and will die early in life.'

Mrs. Shew is said to have been "the only daughter of a Doctor," and that "at one time she had studied medicine," for which reasons her medical opinion has been received as worthy of respect. While fully recognizing the value of heredity in this particular matter, and that remarkable understanding of diseased conditions that the mere entrance to our Medical Colleges gives, nevertheless I question this particular diagnosis of Mrs. Shew—even that of Dr. Francis and Dr. Mott; for little as we now know, still less dependence can be placed on the pathological findings of those days, when Dr. Rush's classical work, "Medical Inquiries and Observations on the Diseases of the Mind," remained their text book and their neurological guide. Since those days we have unlearned very much.

However, there can be no question of serious mental aberration and that, at times, Poe was not responsible for either his actions or his statements. It is certain that at least a few of Griswold's charges as to acts committed at that time had a real foundation. They were of so serious a nature, and were so unlike the normal Poe, that they must be regarded as the offspring of a disordered brain. It was at this time that the association of the names of many women with that of Poe showed the abnormal trend of his mind.

These complications were of such a nature, and so unlike Poe while in his ordinary health, that he must be held irresponsible. Griswold added blackmail and personal dishonor to his other charges, but neither of these can be proved. Griswold stated that Poe had received letters from a woman containing sentimental passages, and that he had demanded money for their return. It is not necessary to go into details further than to say that Poe apparently received such letters and, when this woman unduly interfered and publicly criticised the good name of another, he bitterly resented it and did refer to letters that he had

received which might throw some light on this woman's reason for attempting to besmirch another.

Poe not only denied that he ever demanded money, but declared that he had long ago returned all the letters he had not destroyed. When this story, among others, was published by Thomas Dunn English, Poe brought suit and obtained financial damages; yet, after Poe's death, Griswold publicly circulated the same stories in the memoir which accompanied Poe's collected writings.

It is probable that Poe, under provocation, did say things he later regretted, and that he committed other indiscretions which, in a better moment, he thus extenuates:

> The errors and frailties which I deplore, it cannot at least be said that I was the coward to deny. Never even have I made the attempt at *extenuating* a weakness which is (or, by the blessing of God, *was*) a calamity, although those who did not know me intimately had little reason to regard it other than as a crime. For indeed, had the pride of my family permitted, there was much—very much—there was everything in extenuation. Perhaps even, there was a time at which it might not have been wrong to me to hint—what by the testimony of Dr. Francis and other medical men I might have demonstrated, had the public indeed cared for the demonstration—that irregularities so profoundly lamented were the *effect* of a terrible evil rather than the cause. And now let me thank God that in redemption from the physical ill, I have forever got rid of the moral.

Among other explanations advanced as possibly accounting for some of Poe's irresponsible acts, epilepsy has been alleged. The possibility of its existence could not have been suggested by anyone even remotely familiar with the manifestations of this disease. While it may exhibit itself in protean forms, no type known could have accounted for the peculiarities of Poe's sickness.

The characteristic symptom, and the one symptom that differentiates epilepsy from hysteria and all other nervous seizures, is complete loss of consciousness during the attack, occasionally for considerable periods of time.

We are ignorant of the causation of epilepsy, as we are of many other of the functional neuroses—including insanity —but we do know definitely its symptomatology, in spite of the many forms it may assume. As a rule, the patient falls as if he had received a blow directly upon the brain; and this is what does happen, for the blood rushes in and congests the meninges, engorging the brain and producing profound unconsciousness. What causes this nervous explosion we do not know. It may be compared to the discharge of electricity from a Leyden jar. This at best is a gross comparison, for we *know* absolutely nothing of the actual manifestation of nervous energy; nor do we know how the external afferent irritations, as received by the special senses, are changed into efferent and intelligent brain conceptions and manifestations, nor how our brain cells function in flashing back their responsive conceptions. Did we know, there would not be so many theories. We do know that there is some subtle cell change, accompanied by some unknown process of stimulation of these centers of the five special senses which, in the case of epilepsy, usually signals the coming storm.

In addition to the gross manifestations described, the seizures, although of the same character, may be so slight that they can be detected by one who is a close observer only; yet, that they belong to the same group and have the same underlying cause, is established by an abundance of incontrovertible evidence. Epilepsy may manifest itself in many forms. Occasionally a patient so afflicted will suddenly perform some unexpected or objectionable act, such as disrobing in a public place; or, to use the classical illustration frequently cited of the patient that rose from the dinner table and carefully nailed the beefsteak, which had been placed before him, to the wall of the dining-room. These persons are unconscious of their acts and have no memory of anything that occurred during the seizure.

This last is called "larval" epilepsy, and is the form that was said to have afflicted Poe. It is impossible to qualify him for this or any other manifestation of epilepsy.

There is, however, a characteristic seizure which often complicates chronic alcoholism, and which frequently so closely resembles the first form described, technically called *grand mal*, that only the clinical history of the individual case can differentiate it from *functional* epilepsy. In chronic alcoholism this seizure is due to an *organic* cerebral disintegration and is not held to be a true epilepsy. As far as I can discover in the morbid life-history of Poe, no such attack has been described, nor is there any history that would point to any form of epilepsy. It is true that a state of *amnesia*, or blank-memory period, characterizes both epilepsy and certain forms of chronic alcoholism; but no intelligent physician could possibly confound the two causations. Fairfield, who had read a thesis of Dr. Leblois dealing with the *petit mal* and other larval forms of epilepsy, imagined he saw in this description a method of accounting for Poe's many lapses,

The question as to the part opium played in producing these temporary derangements frequently has been asked and may be answered only in general terms. There is no doubt that Poe occasionally indulged in opium. It is equally certain that this use never became a "habit," or that it had to be continued in frequent and always increasing doses, such as an addict requires. It is a part of the history of dipsomania that when the unutterable depression, which is one of its phases, does supervene, opium will frequently be selected in preference to alcohol. This is only a temporary remedy and alcohol becomes the final solace.

I cannot recall a patient who was a typical dipsomaniac, that became an opium addict, although he might use opium between attacks, or as a means of warding off a threatened seizure. A cousin who visited the Poes, and who became a

temporary inmate of their home, describes this period of Poe's morbid life. She is quoted:

He then frequently refused wine in her presence, and adds that at that time, his fits of intoxication were due to the excessive use of opium.

There is neither direct nor presumptive evidence that Poe was addicted to opium, though he did occasionally use this drug.

Dr. English, at one time Poe's friend and boon companion, but later his avowed enemy, testified:

Had Poe the opium habit when I knew him, I should both as a physician and a man of observation, have discovered it during his frequent visits to my rooms, my visits to his house, and our meetings elsewhere.

Dr. Carter, who was intimate with Poe, and at times treated him during his last Richmond visit, wrote:

He never used opium in any instance that I am aware of. Had it been habitual it would have been detected, as the poet numbered among his associates a half dozen physicians. I never heard it hinted at, and if he had contracted the habit it would have accompanied him to Richmond.

Poe, in a letter he wrote to "Annie," gives a picture of the mental torture from which he suffered, and his method of obtaining relief:

You saw, you *felt* the agony of grief with which I bade you farewell —you remember my expression of gloom—of a dreadful horrible foreboding of Ill. Indeed—*indeed* it seemed to me that Death approached me even then, and that I was involved in the shadow that went before him. . . . I remember nothing distinctly from that moment till I found myself in Providence. I went to bed and wept through a long, long, hideous night of despair. When the day broke I arose and endeavored to quiet my mind by a rapid walk in the cold keen air, but all *would* not do—the Demon tortured me still. Finally I procured two ounces of laudanum, and without returning to my hotel, took the cars back to Boston. . . . I implored you to come *then*, mentioning the place where I should be found in Boston. Having written this letter I

swallowed about half the laudanum, and hurried to the post office, intending not to take the rest till I saw you—for I did not doubt for one moment that Annie would keep her sacred promise. But I had not calculated on the strength of the laudanum for before I reached the post-office my reason was entirely gone and the letter was never put in. Let me pass over—my darling *sister*—the awful horrors which succeeded. A friend was at hand who aided me (if it can be called saving) saved me, but it is only the last three days that I have been able to remember what occurred in that dreary interval. It appears that after the laudanum was rejected from the stomach I became calm, to the casual observer, sane—so that I was suffered to go back to Providence. . . . I am so *ill*—so terribly, hopelessly ill in body and in mind, that I feel I cannot live. . . . Until I subdue this fearful agitation, which if continued will destroy my life or drive me hopelessly mad.

Farewell—here and *hereafter.*

This letter was written on November 16, 1848, a year before Poe's death. It is the best evidence of the mental torture that overcame Poe during these frequently repeated seizures, and it also shows that, when so afflicted, he would resort to any drug he believed would give him relief. In this particular case it is to be presumed that Poe, believing that he could no longer bear the mental pain from which he suffered, selected opium with lethal intent; that he was not accustomed to its use and was not familiar with its effect is made evident by its action on him.

Had he been a confirmed user of this drug, such as DeQuincey described himself to be when he "sipped a *glass of laudanum negus warm and without sugar,*" it would not have affected him so seriously: yet any statement made either by DeQuincey, or by any other drug addict, must be taken with many "grains" of allowance. DeQuincey, for example, in his "Confessions," states that he ordinarily took 8000 minims of laudanum daily—an amount which he estimates to contain 320 grains of opium—and prides himself on his ability to decrease to 1000.

A tumbler of ordinary size holds about 8 ounces; and, as

druggists estimate 450 minims to the ounce of laudanum, nearly 18 ounces, or more than two glasses, would have constituted his daily consumption.

According to the present English pharmacopoeia the amount of opium that is contained in laudanum is calculated on a 10% basis: in an ounce, there are 45 grains, or in 8000 minims, 800 grains. It is entirely possible that, at the time DeQuincey was in the habit of using this drug, the opium content might have been somewhat smaller; but, as far as I can ascertain, this was never so low as 4%. The fact not realized by DeQuincey, certainly one that has not been mentioned by him or others, was the enormous dosage of alcohol daily consumed. Possibly he did not know the constituents of laudanum and, for this reason, could not have estimated the result. To manufacture laudanum it is necessary that the opium be infused in an alcoholic mixture, known as proof spirits. This varies in strength, from 50% to 65% of grain alcohol. Necessarily, with the opium, 18 ounces of proof spirits were consumed.

While neither of these amounts is impossible, it is extremely improbable that any man, especially with DeQuincey's feeble physique, could have long endured this enormous dosage of alcohol and opium.

Many other statements made by DeQuincey as to the effect of opium on him must be taken with equal distrust. His "visions," instead of having had their origin in the use of opium, were the result of an overworked imagination. They could not have been a part of the drug-life of such a patient. A careful reading of his autobiography shows that he had visions long preceding his use of opium.

Possibly DeQuincey did not intend that all of his statements should be taken literally. He had many visionary dream-children and he might have magnified his statements as to dosage, as is frequently the case with addicts. He was given visions vouchsafed to few other mortals.

Poe occasionally used opium for the relief of mental pain. He was not an addict, and he did not use opium to induce visions.

When the opium habit becomes established, its usage is *necessarily* continuous; and the dosage in all cases is slowly increased, though the patient, recognizing the danger, makes determined and intelligent attempts to discontinue. Even with medical aid, recovery is difficult. Patients usually resort to this drug to relieve some morbid condition or affliction. DeQuincey to the contrary, I have never known a patient to use opium habitually for the purpose of producing hallucinatory visions, or clearer and keener mental concepts, or more lucid thought. It is commonly used for the purpose of inducing what, in other and normal individuals, is a sense of well-being. It is not possible that any of Poe's work, whether prose or poetry, was the product of either opium or alcohol; nor could he have written his masterpieces while under the influence of drugs. No man can perform as well under an intoxicant as when the brain is clear. This conclusion is the result of elaborate and well-attested experiments, conducted on men following different vocations without varying the well-established law that while under alcohol they may do things more boldly and more recklessly, they cannot do them so intelligently or accurately, or even so rapidly as when free from stimulants.

However, there are certain hereditary alcoholics who require stimulation to overcome inherent neurasthenic weaknesses either of will power or ability to properly concentrate. In order that such patients may appear normal, they must overcome these inhibitions by such stimulation as apparently restores mental tone. In these cases alcohol seems to stabilize but it adds nothing to their capacity, except the confidence that they never posessed, or that they have lost because of some intercurrent neurosis.

To say that many brilliant men have indulged to excess and in spite of this have accomplished wonderful things, is simply to confuse the morbid ills, which frequently accompany the neurosis of hereditary capacity, with that which constitutes their excellence. *Kubla Khan: A Vision* may have come in sleep as Coleridge describes, but this does not mean that this Vision was the result of an opium dream. Very curious things occur in the dream state, and the result of the brain's unconscious cerebration is one of the most interesting of psychological problems.

Occasionally it happens that one, seduced by the anticipated pleasure he will derive from the use of opium, or urged by curiosity to explore and to experience the effect of this forbidden drug, or forced into its use because of some neurosis, will dare its dangers. At first the experience is pleasurable, whatever the ultimate pain and regret. Because of this our poets sing the pleasures of opium:

> I am engulfed, and drown deliciously.
> Soft music like a perfume, and sweet light
> Golden with audible odours exquisite,
> Swathe me with cerements for eternity.
> Time is no more. I pause and yet I flee.
> A million ages wrap me round with night.
> I drain a million ages of delight.
> I hold the future in my memory.
>
> Also I have this garret which I rent,
> This bed of straw, and this that was a chair,
> This worn-out body, like a tattered tent,
> This crust, of which the rats have eaten part,
> This pipe of opium; rage, remorse, despair;
> This soul at pawn and this delirious heart.

Poe's power of analysis and ability to decipher the most difficult cryptograms, although casually mentioned as a curious mental recreation, have never been explained nor has it received the full consideration that the possession of such a faculty deserves.

There is a class of defectives medically called "Idiot Savant," who, although they may show evidence of weak-mindedness in certain directions, in others exhibit a marvelous development of brain capacity. Blind Tom, the musician, who could at will recall and play any musical selection he had heard, in spite of the fact that he was mentally so feeble that he could not receive a musical education, is an excellent example of this mental disorder. Occasionally there are children, known as lightning calculators, who can solve the most complicated sums in addition, subtraction, root extraction or other arithmetical examples, yet who in other directions show mental feebleness. It is an accompaniment of either precocity or subnormality. An interesting illustration occurred some years ago when a boy of twelve was admitted to one of our greatest universities as a mental prodigy. It was announced that this marked intellectual superiority was the result of judicious parental effort, and that any child, mentally normal, could be developed with equal rapidity, provided wise and efficient methods were adopted in early mental training. Apparently no one recognized this as a beginning of intellectual abnormality which was probably an early symptom of dementia praecox.

Only very occasionally is this particular faculty retained, and, as the brain is developed and age opens up new fields for its occupation, the power is gradually lost. Macaulay, Pope, and a few other noted writers possessed this faculty, and retained it without developing other manifestations of psychoneuroses.

It is possible that this abnormal faculty, which Poe did possess to such an unusual degree, was more or less connected with his marked ability to select, and to so place words as to embody an idea or picture an image after the method of the untaught artist, who occasionally accomplished what no school can teach.

Poe's poems and criticisms could not have been evolved except by a reasoning brain working at its highest point of efficiency. Had it not been clear, it could no more have discerned the images it did reflect than could a distorted mirror accurately reproduce the image of one looking into it. I refer especially to Poe's tales of *Ratiocination* and a certain few of his poems, among which *The Raven* must be mentioned, although it may not have been written by that process of deduction and calculation and in the manner in which Poe explained that he conceived and built it up. And possibly it was composed as he described. On the other hand, such a poem as *Ulalume* might have been formulated in a brain which was somewhat diseased, but whose capacity for rhythm and euphony remained unimpaired.

It is impossible that a brain disordered by alcohol could have been attuned to such harmony. An inspired song may burst forth unpremeditated and fully matured, but such inspiration is not the result of alcohol.

We know the genesis of one of these poems. We have a version of *The Bells* while it was still *in embryo*. In its beginning it was but dimly conceived, and it was painfully gestated and reached its final state of perfection only by painstaking elaboration. While it is true that Poe had the sense of rhythm and the ability so to arrange euphonious words and phrases as to produce the tintinabulation of *The Bells* this poem did not come forth full grown and perfect at birth, as was the case with *The Raven*.

Probably many of Poe's other poems required equal nurture and painstaking gestation. In this diseased condition his brain was not so resilient, or was it so readily responsive to the demands made upon it; yet his sense of euphony remained with him to the end.

Poe was now rapidly approaching the "old age" to which he had jokingly alluded in his preface to "Tamerlane." He was thirty-six; yet because of the degeneration in the

brain cells and the congested and thickened meninges, as well as by reason of the law of early decay that always accompanies precocity, production, such as had characterized his early manhood, was no longer possible.

Although *The Raven* was published early in this period of mental decadence, and still later there had appeared *Ulalume*, *The Bells*, and *Annabel Lee*, Poe's capacity for discriminating and sustained work was passing. To a certain extent "Graham's" and noticeably "The Broadway Journal," were padded with twice and thrice told tales, not because Poe did not wish to furnish fresh material but because he could not.

From this time his work showed definite abnormalities due to mental change. I refer especially to his discussion of the cosmogony of the universe, which he dedicated to Alexander Von Humboldt, and which he called "Eureka" in the belief that he had solved the riddle of the universe. Let us study the matter of this work as well as the manner.

Poe prefaces it:

> To the few who love me and whom I love—to those who feel rather than to those who think—to the dreamers and those who put faith in dreams as in the only realities—I offer this Book of Truths, not in its character of Truth-Teller, but for the Beauty that abounds in its Truth; constituting it true. To these I present the composition as an Art-Product alone:—let us say as a Romance; or, if I be not urging too lofty a claim, as a Poem. *What I here propound is true*:—therefore it cannot die:—or if by any means it be now trodden down so that it die, it will 'rise again to the Life Everlasting.' Nevertheless it is as a Poem only I wish this work to be judged after I am dead.
>
> E. A. P.

It is related of him:

> During the last years of his unhappy life, whenever he yielded to the temptation that was drawing him to the fathomless abyss, as with the resistless swirl of the maelstrom, he always lost himself in sublime rhapsodies of the evolution of the universe, speaking as if from some imaginary platform to a vast audience of rapt and attentive listeners.

Harrison considers it

an astounding circumstance that a mind so apparently wrecked as Poe's was all through the weary months of 1847—months hyphened together by unalterable gloom from the death of Virginia, in January, to the apparition on the December horizon of the fantastic flame of *Ulalume*—could have recovered vitality or even vivacity enough to meditate on the deep themes of *Eureka*, of the cosmogony of the Universe, of the destiny of the human soul and the fate of the circumambient matter; but so it was.

Poe's argumentative faculty attained perhaps its highest expression in *Eureka;* the theme, in itself so abstract, so transcendental, burns and glows with a concrete radiance that *seems* to convince the reader that it is the true light, and not quagmire phosphorescence; the suppleness of the Poet's tongue never abandons him as he climbs the empyrean in his *Excelsior* flights and forces one stronghold after another of retreating Deity, talking volubly of Newton, Kepler, and La Place the while, until at last *Eureka!* bursts from his lips and he fancies he has found the Eternal.

Having worked the book out through the long and hollow hours of 1847—he was ready with it as a lecture in the early months of 1848. His hope was to rent a hall and secure an audience of three or four hundred persons who would pay him sufficiently to start on a lecturing tour in the interests of the 'Stylus'—which now again sweeps up to the surface like the drowned face of Delacroix's maiden. Instead of three or four hundred, sixty persons assembled in the hall of the Society Library, New York, and shivered through three hours of a bleak February night, listening, as one of them reported, 'to a rhapsody of the most intense brilliancy.' Poe appeared inspired, and his inspiration affected the scant audience almost painfully. His eyes seemed to glow like those of his own *Raven*. . . . Not disheartened at his poor success nor at the absurdly caricatured accounts of the lecture in the public prints, Poe went bravely to work and wrote out the theory in book form, offering it, with flashing eyes and exuberant enthusiasm to Mr. Putnam. . . . He suggested an edition of 50,000; Mr. Putnam listened attentively, and ventured on an edition of 500.

The mere fact that Poe left the field of literature to undertake scientific researches, or that he believed he had established a new theory of the universe is not, of itself, evidence of an unsound mind; nor do extravagant and ill

understood deductions necessarily indicate a developing mental disease. It is something often experienced that, among normal men, dissatisfaction arises with their occupation or profession, even when success has attended their efforts, and that many literary and scientific men reach forth into new and strange domains. Goethe was not satisfied with his great poetical reputation, but insisted on being regarded as a man of science: he wrote a book—"Farbenlehre"—in an effort to disprove Newton's "Theory of Colors." This book demonstrated that he was not familiar with the elementary principles of light, and because of his theory he was derided for his scientific pretensions, although his researches in comparative anatomy, in conjunction with Oken, had demonstrated that the cranium was composed of consolidated vertebrae, and thus scientifically established brain evolution from original spinal centers.

Cruikshank, in his old age, was vociferous in asserting his right to be considered the author of "Oliver Twist," because he had suggested to Dickens certain illustrations for that work: his great reputation as a caricaturist did not satisfy him. Even Tennyson made a failure of "Queen Mary" and other attempts at dramatic composition, a form in which, it is said, he believed that he excelled; and Longfellow committed the unpardonable sin of writing "Kavanagh."

George Eliot's, Emerson's, and Lowell's essays in the field of poetry are sad commentaries on their ability to judge of their limitations. None of these should be harshly criticized because he failed to estimate properly his own individual capacity.

Nor can all enthusiasts be classed among the abnormal, even if they go to the extent of dwelling unduly on some abstruse problem, or attempting to solve some riddle that is regarded as unsolvable. Men perfectly sane have attempted to square the circle, and many perpetual motion

machines are now attic ornaments. Men such as those that sought a secret that would give them everlasting life are now devoting their superabundant energy to newer fads, and are devotees of some recent cult. There are too many Scientists, such as Lodge, Conan Doyle and others of the faddists, for us to be able to draw a distinct line between those merely credulous and the mentally unsound; and there are too many pretenders in medical, astronomical and the physical sciences for us to say who is the Great Discoverer and who is the self-deceived. Knowledge is, at best, a chimera: and all who seek must base their findings on a theory that future investigators are sure to question. Some Einstein may yet upset our most definitely established natural laws.

That we may only approximate knowledge of the Supreme Cause need not make us reject all guesses; nor, with Bacon, put the jeering question in the mouth of the smiling Pilate. Philosophers have long sought the key-stone of some definite *Truth* by which to support their contentions; but, thus far, none has been found.

Although such speculations as engaged the attention of Poe need not arouse suspicion as to the soundness of his mind, they were the forerunner of other and more serious vagaries. Had he, even in these last few years when he seemed most normal, been aroused by an inquiry as to cosmogony, again would his eyes have flashed, his congested brain would have become turgid with blood, and there might have come a morbid mental reaction as pronounced as the "single glass" could have produced. Poe's power of definitely expressing his thoughts might have been swept away by the vehemence of his utterance, appearing confused only because of the torrent of his ideas.

For this reason the apparent incoherence would have been only an evidence of over-active brain functioning. Woodberry, in his "Notes," gives several examples of this

condition occurring in the last few months of Poe's life, when he recited for bar-room roysterers his own and other notable poems. It was not a hectoring drunkard engaged in saloon brawls, haranguing a throng of grinning auditors: it was an organically brain-diseased patient, whose friends did not realize the necessity of permanently secluding him. Most emphatically it was not a moral lapse, nor the result of vicious living; nor should his life be cited as "full of instruction and warning," nor should he pay "the penalty of wrong doing that its anatomy should be displayed for the common study and advantage."

Poe was not a man of scientific training, nor was he a classical scholar, in spite of the display of both scientific and classical knowledge in much that he wrote.

When he fathered Brown's "Conchology" it was not for scientific reasons, but in the preparation of "Eureka" he was deadly in earnest; and while neither the matter nor the effort arouses suspicion, yet the manner and the circumstances under which it was produced are the best evidence that it was the result of a disordered brain. It was at this time that Harrison thus described his condition:

> He found it impossible to sleep without the presence of some friend by his bedside. Mrs. Clemm, his ever devoted friend and comforter, more frequently fulfilled the office of watcher. The poet, after retiring, would summon her, and while she stroked his broad brow, he would indulge his wild flights of fancy to the Aidenn of his dreams. He never spoke nor moved in these moments, unless the hand was withdrawn from his forehead; then he would say, with childish naivete, 'No, no, not yet!'—while he lay with half-closed eyes.

Woodberry reports a statement of Mrs. Clemm:

> He never liked to be alone, and I used to sit up with him, often till four o'clock in the morning, he at his desk, writing, and I dozing in my chair. When he was composing *Eureka*, we used to walk up and down the garden, his arm around me, mine around him, until I was so tired I could not walk. He would stop every few minutes and explain his ideas to me, and ask if I understood him.

It is interesting to read the criticisms made by commentators on the theories contained in this book.

Griswold believed:

To the composition of *Eureka* he brought his subtlest and highest capacities, in their most perfect development.

Denying that the Arcana of the Universe can be explored by induction, but informing his imagination with the various results of science, he entered with unhesitating boldness, though with no guide but the divinest instinct,—into the sea of speculation, and there built up of according laws and their phenomena, as under the influence of a scientific inspiration, his theory of Nature. . . . When I read *Eureka* I could not help but think it immeasurably superior as an illustration of genius to the 'Vestiges of Creation;' and as I admired the poem so I regretted its pantheism, which is not necessary to its main design.

Mrs. Whitman in her "Defense of Poe" made the following comment:

The unrest and faithlessness of the age culminated in him. Nothing so solitary, nothing so hopeless, nothing so desolate as his spirit in its darker moods has been instanced in the literary history of the nineteenth century.

It has been said that this theory, as expressed in *Eureka* of the universal diffusion of Deity in and through all things, is identical with the Brahminical faith as expressed in the Bagvat Gita. But those who will patiently follow the vast reaches of his thought in this sublime poem of the 'Universe' will find that he arrives at a form of unbelief far more appalling than that expressed in the gloomy pantheism of India, since it assumes that the central, creative Soul is, alternatively, not *diffused* only, but merged and *lost* in the universe, and the universe in it: 'A new universe swelling into existence or subsiding into nothingness at every throb of the Heart Divine.'

The creative Energy, therefore, '*now* exists solely in the diffused matter and spirit, of the existing universe.' The author assumes, moreover, that each individual soul retains in its youth a dim consciousness of vast dooms and destinies far distant in the bygone time, and infinitely awful; from which inherent consciousness the conventional 'World-Reason' at last awakens it as from a dream. 'It says you live, and the time was when you lived not. You have been created. An Intelligence exists greater than your own, and it is only through

this Intelligence that you live at all.' 'These things,' he says, '*we struggle to comprehend and cannot:* cannot, because being untrue, they are of necessity incomprehensible.'

Woodberry, not altogether relying on his own ability to solve Poe's conception of this riddle of the universe, called on Professor Irving Stringham of the Astronomical Department of the University of California "for the substance of the criticism of Poe's astronomical speculations." The result of their double labor still leaves much to be explained:

> The mind knows intuitively . . . that the creative act of Deity must have been the simplest possible; or, to expand and define this statement, it must have consisted in willing into being a primordial particle, the germ of all things existing without relation to aught, or, in the technical phrase, unconditioned.
>
> This particle, by virtue of the divine volition, radiated into space uniformly in all directions, a shower of atoms, of diverse form, irregularly arranged among themselves, but all, generally speaking, equally distant from their source; this operation was repeated at intervals, but with decreased energy in each new instance, so that the atoms were impelled less far.

So this composite explanation continues for several pages and a fairly lucid—as demonstrated by this excerpt —explanation is made of Poe's Theory of the Universe. However, the scrambled expositions of Poe, Woodberry and Stringham do not seem to me to bear a marked resemblance to Poe's unscrambled statement. Poe himself might have felt highly gratified could he have read this appreciation, but I believe that he would have rejected at least two-thirds of the statements it contains.

I do not mean to criticize, or to deny, the ability of either critic further than to suggest that where a thing is so essentially obscure, and so evidently unformed in the creator's own brain, it was not wise to attempt a solution. Their double explanation is sufficiently lucid. Just how

nearly it represents Poe's basic idea is the matter which I regard as debatable.

Woodberry concludes his full review:

Eureka affords one of the most striking instances in literature of a naturally strong intellect tempted by overweening pride, to an Icarian flight, and betrayed into an ignoble exposure of its own presumption and ignorance.

He further states:

Nor, were *Eureka* to be judged as a poem, that is to say as a fictitious cosmogony, would the decision be more favorable; even then so far as it is obscure to the reader it must be pronounced defective; so far as it is understood, involving as it does in its primary conceptions incessant contradictions of the necessary laws of thought, it must be pronounced meaningless. Poe believed himself to be that extinct being, a universal genius of the highest order; and he wrote this essay to prove his powers in philosophy and in science. To the correspondent to whom he sent the *addenda* he declared 'As to the lecture, I am very quiet about it—but if you have dealt with such topics, you will recognize the novelty and *moment* of my views. What I have propounded will (in good time) revolutionize the world of Physical and Metaphysical science. I say this calmly, but I say it.'

Lauvrière's solution, contained in a Life of Poe, is thus stated:

In the Beginning, God created a particle without form, without individuality, without emptiness, absolutely unique. This particle was the germ of all things. It glittered in space in a wave of unequally distributed atoms of different shapes. Other waves followed, the atoms of which were forced among the original atoms by a slight pressure. Still other waves followed that were somewhat weaker, but which, in time, more or less completely filled this space with a multitude of atoms. Bearing a proportion to the number of atoms at the surface of this sphere and starting at the square of the distance between these surfaces and the center, the force of diffusion continues to decrease.*

As soon as this is exhausted an attractive force which is the natural reaction, and which is in inverse proportion to the square of this distance, develops and in its turn draws back the mass of atoms to a common

*Proportionné à la fois au nombre des atomes, aux surfaces des spheres, et, partant, au carré des distances entre ces surfaces et la centre, la force diffusive n' cessé de décroître.

center. To prevent the immediate return of the atoms to their primitive unity a third force manifests itself. This is a repulsive force, agglomerating these atoms into a mass, slowly forming sidereal bodies of infinite and heterogeneous shapes. This repulsive force, a form of immaterial ether which, lacking a better name, Poe called electricity, manifests itself in light, heat, magnetism, even in life and brain power. It is the spiritual element of things divine and for this reason it is impossible of human analysis. It is the breath of God animating all beings on this earth with a greater or less consciousness of divinity. Our universe, where all these phenomena actually take place, is filled with these reactions and with consequent condensation, the result of evolution. While the force of attraction slowly condenses it, that of repulsion shapes it into combinations more and more complicated. However, as, in time, the play of these combinations will become exhausted because the divine laws of creation have been fulfilled, the attractive force, the inevitable consequence of primitive diffusion can only increase itself in proportion to the force of repulsion, it being a temporary invention of God that will have been lost.* From this will come the fated result that all created worlds will, one by one, be in the central conflagration by which means matter, which is in fact only the result of attractive and repulsive forces, will be swallowed up;—will be engulfed in the bosom of the initial particle, and in the confusion of the two forces that constitute it. Thus will end our existing universe. Others may come after it, as others have preceded it, and as others possibly exist in infinite space. For each creation, in essence, is only the ephemeral result of a diffusion and reabsorption into the divine being. This was Poe's conception of the universe.

It is certain that Poe believed he knew what he was trying to express and, in his attempt to make this plain to the world, he used all the powers of thought-compelling English in his vocabulary to convey his meaning to the world, still in ignorance of the first cause.

Poe's theories have been variously interpreted and, a matter of surprise to me, serious attempts have been made to formulate them. He has excited the admiration,

*Mais, lorsqu'à la longue se trouvera épuisé le jeu de ces combinaisions, lorsque seront accomplies les vues, divines sur la création, la force d'attraction, conséquence inévitable de la diffusion primitive, ne pourra que s'accroitre de tout ce que la force de répulsion, simple intervention temporaire de Dieu, aura perdu.

even if he has not been able to satisfy the comprehension of many of his biographers.

Poe's own elucidation deserves some consideration. In discussing the subject as it was given in his preliminary lecture he thus epitomized it:

General Proposition. Because nothing was, therefore all things are.

1. An inspection of the *universality* of gravitation—of the fact that each particle tends not to any one common point, but to every other particle, suggests perfect totality of *absolute unity* as the source of the phenomenon.

2. Gravity is but the mode in which is manifested the tendency of all things to return into their original unity.

3. I show that the law of the return—i. e., the law of gravity—is but a necessary result of the necessary and sole possible mode of equable irradiation of matter through a *limited* space.

4. Were the universe of stars (contradistinguished from the universe of space) unlimited, no worlds could exist.

5. I show unity is nothingness.

6. All matter springing from unity sprang from nothingness, i. e., was created.

7. All will return to unity, i. e., nothingness.

I would be obliged to you if you would let me know how far these ideas are coincident with those of the 'Vestiges,'

Very Resp'y yr. ob. st.,
EDGAR A. POE.

Poe's complete statement of his theory is not more comprehensible:

I design to speak of the *Physical, Metaphysical and Mathematical—of the Material and Spiritual Universe:—of its Existence, its Origin, its Creation, its Present Conditions and its Destiny.* . . . My general proposition, then, is this:—*In the Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of ALL Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.* . . .

As our starting-point, then, let us adopt the *Godhead.* Of this Godhead in itself, he alone is not imbecile—he alone is not impious who propounds—nothing. "We know absolutely *nothing* of the nature or essence of God:—in order to comprehend what he is, we should have to be God ourselves. . . . By *Him,* however—*now,* at least, the Incompre-

hensible—by Him—assuming him as *Spirit*—that is to say, as *not Matter*—a distinction which, for all intelligible purposes, will stand well instead of a definition—by Him, then, existing as a Spirit, let us content ourselves, to-night, with supposing to have been *created*, or made out of nothing, [not a shower of atoms, created from a particle, radiated into space uniformly in all directions, as Woodberry interprets it] by dint of his Volition—at some point of Space which we will take as a center—at some period into which we do not pretend to inquire, but at all events immensely remote—by Him, then again, let us suppose to have been created—*what*? This is a vitally momentous epoch in our considerations. *What* is it that we are justified—that alone we are justified in supposing to have been, primarily and solely, *created*? We have attained a point where only *Intuition* can aid us:—but now let me recur to the idea which I have already suggested as that alone which we can properly entertain of Intuition. It is but *the conviction arising from those inductions or deductions of which the processes are so shadowy as to escape our consciousness, elude our reason, or defy our capacity of expression.*

With this understanding, I now assert—that an intuition altogether irresistible, although inexpressible, forces me to the conclusion that what God originally created—that that Matter which, by dint of his Volition, he first made from his Spirit, or from Nihility, *could* have been nothing but Matter in its utmost conceivable state of—what?—of *Simplicity?* This will be found the sole absolute *assumption* of my Discourse.

There are more than one hundred pages of this—and such. I have read it attentively and have tried to understand it, but it is beyond my comprehension.

In the preparation of "Eureka," and in the earnestness with which Poe advanced the most abstruse and incomprehensible theories as if they were axioms and in themselves bore irrefutable evidence of truth; in his belief that his reputation would be founded, not on his tales nor on his poetry which, to the last, he affected to regard as trifles, but on the demonstrated facts contained in this epoch-making book, lie the proofs of his morbid state. Apparently he believed that this discovery would be the foundation on which the world would erect his cenotaph, that the subject "was

of momentous interest," and that the truths which he disclosed "were of more consequence than the theory of gravitation." Later he wrote a letter in answer to a criticism of *Eureka,* in which he stated:

> The ground covered by La Place compares with that covered by my own theory, as a bubble with the ocean on which it floats.

Poe believed that he had solved the riddle of the universe. He criticized Kepler, La Place and Newton; at the same time his statements showed that he possessed only a smattering of their theories.

None of his biographers saw in "Eureka" the pitiful exhibition of a decaying intellect no longer under the domination of a strong and directing intelligence.

> And travelers now within that valley,
> Through the red-littened windows, see
> Vast forms that move fantastically
> To a discordant melody.

And we find him a paranoid vociferously voicing unintelligible hypotheses based on misconception and ignorance of natural laws.

Poe's abnormality consisted not in theorizing and attempting to explain things unexplainable, for this is a matter of daily occurrence even among the normal, but in his inability to understand the basic absurdities and false reasoning on which his beliefs were founded. An insane man may be the most logical of all logicians, provided you grant his premises. The untenableness of these, out of which he cannot be reasoned, constitutes his insanity.

It was during this time that Poe, in a letter to Eveleth, described himself:

> I became insane, with long periods of horrible sanity. During these fits of absolute unconsciousness I drank. God only knows how much or how long. As a matter of course my enemies referred the insanity to the drink rather than the drink to the insanity.

Another manifestation of Poe's abnormal mental state during the last few years of his life was the platonic love he exhibited for the women with whom he associated. Though it is certain that Poe did love his wife, it was not after the manner of the cave man. She was an invalid, slowly dying of consumption and for many years Poe attended her, nursed her, and was not only a devoted but a faithful husband. Mrs. Weiss has strongly dwelt on the nature of the relation that existed between Poe and his wife. She insists that the marriage was one of convenience, not love, and that it was to Mrs. Clemm rather than to the daughter that Poe turned for intellectual sympathy. Apparently neither could greatly have aided him by literary companionship. Mrs. Phelps, in an article quoted by Woodberry, amplifies Mrs. Weiss' suggestion:

> Mrs. Clemm, his aunt, was my mother's dear friend. I know something about that [this marriage], having heard my mother and Mrs. Clemm discuss it. He did not love his cousin, except as a dear cousin, when he married her, but she was very fondly attached to him and was frail and consumptive. While she lived he devoted himself to her with all the ardor of a lover.

In all the years of their married life and until a short time preceding her death, no breath of scandal ever touched Poe's name, in spite of the known uncanny attraction that he exercised over women, which later resulted in so many complications. Had there been, even secretly, a history of this kind there could have been no such devotion and tender solicitude for him as was shown by his wife's mother, a bond that death itself could not sever.

Yet, even before his wife died, at least one affair occurred which we find described as follows:

> Early in 1845 he had formed such an attachment with Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood, a poetess of thirty and the wife of an American artist. . . . Poe had noticed her verses with great favor, and in his New York lecture, in February, especially eulogized her in warm

terms. Shortly after this latter incident Willis one day handed her *The Raven*, with the author's request for her judgment on it, and for an introduction to herself.

Mrs. Osgood's own impression of Poe is given as follows:

I shall never forget the morning I was summoned to the drawing room to receive him. With his proud and beautiful head erect, his dark eyes flashing with the electric light of feeling and of thought, a peculiar, an inimitable blending of sweetness and hauteur in his manner and expression, he greeted me, calmly, gravely, almost coldly, yet with so marked an earnestness that I could not help being impressed by it.

Again she says:

I never thought of him till he sent me his *Raven*, and asked Willis to introduce him to me, and immediately after I went to Albany, and afterwards to Boston and Providence to avoid him, and he followed me to each of those places and wrote to me, imploring me to love him, many a letter which I did not reply to till his *wife* added her entreaties to his and said that I might save him from infamy, and her from death, by showing an affectionate interest in him.

These and other statements were made by Mrs. Osgood in an account of Poe written after his death. She sums up her review as follows:

But it was in his conversations and his letters, far more than in his published poetry and prose writings, that the genius of Poe was most gloriously revealed. His letters were divinely beautiful, and for hours I have listened to him, entranced by strains of such pure and almost celestial eloquence as I have never read or heard elsewhere. Alas! in the thrilling words of Stoddard,

> 'He might have soared in the morning light,
> But he built his nest with the birds of night!
> But he lies in dust, and the stone is rolled
> Over the sepulchre dim and cold;
> He has cancelled all he has done or said,
> And gone to the dear and holy dead.
> Let us forget the path he trod,
> And leave him now, to his Maker, God.'

A delegation of women, headed by Margaret Fuller, attempted to break this most cherished friendship and made a formal protest. A letter was found by a woman who

was visiting the Poe household and, in a jealous rage, she circulated stories that seriously reflected on Mrs. Osgood. This woman also had written Poe compromising letters and, when he knew of her activities, he threatened, in revenge, to make these letters public. It was on this woman's assertions that English and Griswold based their charge of blackmail, for which Poe brought and won a suit for defamation of character. Undoubtedly Poe's abnormal condition, even at that time, was known and understood by his immediate family—otherwise it is not possible for such association to have been carried on with the knowledge and consent of his wife and, necessarily, of Mrs. Clemm.

Soon after Mrs. Poe's death, and while Poe was convalescing from a long and serious illness that had mentally incapacitated him, there was another platonic adventure. This time it was with Mrs. Shew, a family friend older than himself, who was nursing him and had been most considerate in looking after the financial needs of the family. His irresponsible condition was realized and, therefore, no particular attention was paid to the matter further than that it necessitated a severance of personal intercourse:

> Mrs. Shew finding that her protege was too irresponsible and romantic to be allowed freedom as he had been accustomed to, broke off the acquaintance. The consequence which, although he had foreseen it, must in his state of health have been the sudden and complete cessation of intercourse between the two families.

It is certain that both Mrs. Clemm and Mrs. Shew regarded this merely as a manifestation of Poe's mental state; the mother-love was not abated and Mrs. Shew continued her friendly ministrations—from a distance.

Poe wrote her a long and rambling letter, maudlin and incoherent, and not such as a normal Poe would have written:

Are you to vanish like all that I love, or desire, from my darkened and 'lost soul'? I have read over your letter again and again, and cannot make it possible with any degree of certainty, that you wrote it in your right mind. . . .

Your ingenuous and sympathetic nature will be constantly wounded by its contact with the hollow, heartless world; and for me, alas! unless some true and tender, and pure womanly love saves me, I shall hardly last a year longer alive. . . . Why turn your soul from its true work for the desolate to the thankless and miserly world? . . . I felt my heart stop, and I was sure I was then to die before your eyes. Louise, it is well—it is fortunate—you looked up with a tear in your dear eyes, and raised the window, and talked of the guava jelly you had brought for my sore throat.

Almost as absurd was the passion Poe developed for Mrs. Whitman, the poetess, a widow some six years older than himself. This passion was a more serious matter, for she responded to the call. Griswold related, with great detail, many things that bore on this courtship; but, as usual, the facts were distorted and his statements were absolutely denied by Mrs. Whitman. It is impossible to doubt the truth of either Mrs. Whitman's statements or her knowledge of the facts which Griswold alleged occurred in her home; and, inasmuch as these allegations were untrue, nothing could more seriously reflect on Griswold's honor or better show the *animus* of his memoir.

That Poe was at times abnormal Mrs. Whitman does not deny, and it was her realization of his condition that prevented their marriage. His actions were simply the result of an unbalanced mind, craving love and sympathy, yet unable to control and govern itself; drifting into dangerous waters without pilot or rudder.

Poe, during his last visits to Richmond that preceeded his death, again proposed marriage; this time to a childhood friend with whom it is said that, as a boy, he had been in love. With still another he was more sinned against than sinning.

All commentators on the writings of Poe have called

special attention to the small part love plays in any of his stories, and to the fact that nowhere, and on no occasion does he mention *woman* without due reverence.

I believe that there was only one woman besides his wife to whom Poe was attracted or on whom he leaned. It was of her he thought in the dark days when his desolate and hungry heart demanded "surcease of sorrow." This was neither Mrs. Shew, nor was it Mrs. Osgood; it was not Mrs. Whitman nor was it Mrs. Shelton. It was Annie, "my beloved sister," as he was pleased to call her, and I believe that his other infatuations, as well as his peculiar conduct with Mrs. Whitman, were merely the result of his disordered fancy.

If Poe ever loved any woman, as contradistinguished from *women*, it was "Annie." She appealed to him in the only way a woman can properly appeal to a man. Love, with a foundation of respect, can never be destroyed.

It was to "Annie" Poe's heart turned in his darkest days and, when the melancholy night forced on him the urge of death as the only release from his overpowering depression, it was of "Annie" he thought, and to her in his agony he wrote the farewell letter.

He described her in *Landor's Cottage* which, in one of his letters, he said contained "something about Annie":

> Instantly a figure advanced to the threshold—that of a young woman, slender, or rather slight, and somewhat above the medium height. As she approached, with a certain *modest decision* of step altogether indescribable, I said to myself, 'Surely here I have found the perfection of natural in contradistinction from artificial grace.' The second impression which she made on me, but by far the more vivid of the two, was that of *enthusiasm*. So intense an expression of *romance*, perhaps I should call it, or of unworldliness, as that which gleamed from her deep-set eyes, had never so sunk into my heart of hearts before. I know not how it is, but this peculiar expression of the eye, wreathing itself occasionally into the lips, is the most powerful, if not absolutely the *sole* spell, which rivets my interest in woman. '*Ro-*

mance,' provided my readers fully comprehend what I would here imply by the word—'romance' and 'womanliness' seem to me convertible terms: and, after all, what man truly *loves* in woman, is, simply, her *womanhood*. The eyes of Annie (I heard someone from the interior call her 'Annie, darling!') were 'spiritual gray'; her hair, a light chestnut: this is all I had time to observe of her.

It was "For Annie" that one of his most remarkable—Stedman names it the finest, and I know no better Poe authority—poems was written and to her he consecrates his eternal love:

And so it lies happily,
  Bathing in many
A dream of the truth
  And the beauty of Annie—
Drowned in a bath
  Of the tresses of Annie.

She tenderly kissed me,
  She fondly caressed,
And then I fell gently
  To sleep on her breast.
Deeply to sleep
  From the heaven of her breast.

And I rest so contentedly,
  Now in my bed
(With her love at my breast)
  That you fancy me dead—
That you shudder to look at me,
  Thinking me dead:—

But my heart it is brighter
  Than all of the many
Stars in the sky,
  For it sparkles with Annie
It glows with the light
  Of the love of my Annie—
With the thought of the light
  Of the eyes of my Annie.

I do not believe that Poe, either at that time or later, was *insane* in the usually accepted sense. It is true that by heredity he was abnormal. It is certain that he did not, in the ordinary relations of life, always view things as the

normal individual does; but just who is *normal* is a matter difficult to decide. I have met and studied many men. I have read the biographies and autobiographies of many and know of some others by tradition. I have found no man who ever freely confessed to evil doing, except possibly poor Pepys; or who would analyze himself, his daily acts or the motives which underlie those acts, and tabulate them as they should be tabulated in the moral code. Even to themselves they misstate and hide, extenuate or actually do not realize, as was the case with Rousseau, the abnormalities which deform their inner lives.

Γνῶθι σ' αὐτὸν is a Utopian concept impossible of literal realization.

No man can know himself, nor can he fairly judge his own actions. Compulsions seem, at times, to be excellent reasons: like the convex mirror the mind can not reflect the image in its true proportions. Occasionally, Narcissus-like, it becomes enamored of the picture reflected in its depths.

I know of but one man, and of him by legend only, who led an unblemished and absolutely moral life, pure in thought and with no remembrance of any evil act, and therefore without a *realizing conscience*.

There is one other man whom, for some sixty years, I have known intimately, and whom for that reason, perhaps, I judge leniently, who is under the conviction that his every action is dominated by the highest principles only, and that the golden rule is his guide—provided a few occasional deviations are allowed proper explanation. Nevertheless, even he finds that there are unplumbed depths in the recesses of his secret soul that remain uncharted, and unexpected mental reservations at times arise that deflect the pure ray of righteousness so that it does not always make luminous the hidden heart-spring of action; and that possibly certain inherited prejudices cling to and distort a judgment otherwise absolutely free, un-

warped, and untrammeled. I also know very many men, some in San Quentin and others who should be there, all convinced of the honesty of their motives and the righteousness of their lives; only some circumstance over which they had no control, or a carping world and an oversevere moral code, prevented them from being properly understood and caused them to be misjudged. The fault is with the world and not with themselves. Nature has inoculated us with a moral serum which prevents us from being poisoned by our own virus. The world is full of Holy Willies: if we could see ourselves as other people sometimes see us, it would be an unlivable world. Years of study and observation have made me lenient in judging the faults of those I know. Heredity is as responsible for our good qualities and our successes as it is for the evil that is in us, and our failures.

The world is a most uncharitable judge in awarding punishments and rewards; it builds jails, poorhouses and asylums for those who fail because nature has handicapped them in their life-race, while it praises and honors those who succeed because they are bountifully endowed. We know, further, that great genius such as Poe inherited is always accompanied and can be seriously modified by a neurosis that may end in moral or mental degeneration.

In recent years many books have been written on the relation existing between genius and insanity, and "The Insanity of Genius" has become a familiar theme because so many "psychologists" and pseudo-scientists have endeavored to point out a close relationship. In the popular estimation, they seem to have proved that genius and insanity as mental states are almost identical.

Alienists resent this loose classification and, while they recognize a pathological basis for both insanity and genius, which bear some relation to each other because they both belong to the same great family group, they also recog-

nize that, in the practical application of this theoretical association there is, separating these varying abnormalities a chasm as deep as the Grand Canyon and as broad as the Painted Desert. We differentiate them as distinctly as we do the cerulean water of Tahoe or the Dolomite lakes from the muddy streams that mark the workings of our placer mines. Neither is crystal clear.

Insanity chooses for its victims not the highly intelligent nor the genius, but rather the subnormal and "the unwashed." Overstudy is the most frequently alleged yet the most infrequent cause of insanity. I have examined, studied and "psychologized" many thousands of insane persons and I have access to the records of a hundred thousand, but nowhere have I found even a normal proportion between the educated and the uneducated. Personally I know a few men of genius whom I denominate cranks, but I surely do not regard them as insane. Only rarely do they pass the line of demarcation and develop such delusions as constitute insanity. I have studied the life histories of the many great writers and artists who have been recklessly included in this classification. Only occasionally can the verdict of insanity be justly pronounced: there are found many eccentricities, abnormalities, compulsions and obsessions which, to the psychologist, are exceedingly interesting as exhibiting mental greatness, as well as mental weakness. Often do we find the two combined so wonderfully as to excite our comment—even to the extent of insisting that they are unsound; but this charge of unsoundness by no means can be considered tantamount to insanity.

Genius rarely runs amuck.

The assertion has been made that alienists regard all the world as insane. This is true in the sense that there is no individual without peculiarities. This does not mean that the whole world is insane, but it does mean that no human being lives who, when weighed, will not be found wanting

in some normal quality or attribute, and who will not show a mental peculiarity in some special thing or way. Emeralds that are without flaw are regarded by lapidaries with suspicion, for none are found in nature: they can appear perfect only when synthetically manufactured. It must be understood that mental peculiarities and moral idiosyncrasies do not constitute insanity: only because we regard these deviations from the normal as hereditary and often impossible to overcome, are they classed in the group of the Unsound. In other words we are willing to regard these peculiarities as abnormalities with which nature has afflicted us—not as crimes for which their possessor should be held responsible.

In the case of Poe, not only were the degenerative changes that time brings added to hereditary peculiarities, but alcohol had hastened this degeneration until a time came when, even without its use, abnormal mental states were of frequent occurrence. Poe realized the fate that awaited him, and saw the "dragon at the bottom of the well." Mrs. Whitman repeats a confession of his which gives us the key:

> I have absolutely no pleasure in the stimulants in which I sometimes so madly indulge. It has not been in the pursuit of pleasure that I have periled life and reputation and reason. It has been a desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories.

If there were "memories," they were of pre-natal inheritance. Poe was not an alienist who could make a differential diagnosis between melancholy and melancholia. He suffered, he knew not why. That he could not overcome his morbid inheritance is not a matter for blame. He made repeated and heroic struggles against the evil that obsessed him. He manfully resisted the alcoholic craving and it left him for long periods of time, as is the law of this disease; when it did overwhelm him, there was no denying the demand it made.

It must be remembered that in the life history of those who suffer from dipsomania, in addition to the craving for alcohol there are periods of both elation and depression. Often visionary schemes are undertaken without corresponding capacity to understand their real difficulties or impracticabilities. This is probably the explanation of Poe's determination to found a journal for the utterance of his individual opinions. He had failed in every journalistic attempt that required concentrated and long-continued effort. He had found by many bitter experiences that he could not continue for any long period of time without an intercurrent attack of his hereditary malady which would incapacitate him for weeks or months; yet, to the very last, this idea of founding a magazine "for freer expression" haunted him. And on what magazine did he work that he did not express his individual opinions? After editing the leading journals of Philadelphia and New York, it was tempting the risibilities to undertake a "Literary Arbiter" at Oquawka, in the then unsettled State of Illinois.

Although Poe's reputation had so greatly grown that all magazines and periodicals were opened to him at remunerative prices, he delayed publishing his *magnum opus*, "a *book* on American literature generally" to be named "The Authors of America," and was contented with a few reviews and descriptive stories.

He wrote:

'I am *so* busy now, and feel so full of energy. Engagements to write are pouring in upon me every day. I had two proposals last week from *Boston*. I sent yesterday a contribution to the 'American Review' about *Critics and Criticism*. Not long ago I sent one to the 'Metropolitan' called *Landor's Cottage*: it has something about Annie in it, and will appear, I suppose, in the March number. To the 'So. Lit. Messenger' I have sent fifty pages of *Marginalia*, five pages to appear each month of the current year. I have also made permanent engagements with every magazine in America (except 'Peterson's

National') including a Cincinnati magazine, called the 'Gentleman's'.

While these statements may in a way be regarded as "expansive," and are characteristic of those alternating states of exaltation and depression from which Poe suffered, there was truth in them.

Poe did not realize that his opportunity had come too late, and that he no longer had the capacity to deliver.

Landor's Cottage and its near relation, *The Domain of Arnheim*, are the best works of this period. Poe, mentally diseased, was more capable of such descriptive work than any of his normal contemporaries.

Poe's apparent return to health and his prospect of independence were not of long duration. Early in 1849 he relapsed.

Mrs. Clemm wrote:

I thought he would die several times. God knows I wish we were both dead and in our graves. It would I am sure be far better.

Poe wrote to Mrs. Whitman:

My sadness is *unaccountable*, and this makes me the more sad. I am full of forebodings. *Nothing* cheers or comforts me. My life seems wasted—the future looks a dreary blank.

This letter contains a possible key to the "solution" of Poe's personal equation. It is as typical of his abnormal mental state as the one previously quoted.

Poe again had visions of a new magazine, and this time it was with a man from Oquawka. Actual business arrangements were entered into and money was advanced for its publication. In an effort to raise funds for his share in this enterprise, Poe undertook a lecture tour; but his departure from Fordham was delayed by a serious attack of depression which temporarily unfitted him for all attempts of a literary character. Either he had a presenti-

ment, or his condition was such that he believed death was near.

Poe produced nothing after the year 1845, when he was thirty-four years of age, that materially added to his literary reputation; yet one contributor to his Baltimore Memorial, naively lamenting his death, said:

> But the tragedy of Poe's death is too deep for words of mine. He was only thirty-nine years old. His best work ought to have been before him. Who can compute the loss to our literature by his untimely death?

We know that, as the cells that line the leaves, and that boil down and prepare for absorption the raw juices extracted from the ground by the roots, slowly fill with calcareous incrustations, so do the arteries of the human brain harden, and the cells cease actively to function or are absorbed. We call this process arterio-sclerosis and its result is old age which, in some, is delayed; to others it comes comparatively early in life. For this reason it is difficult to judge a man's age by the number of years he has lived. From this comes the axiomatic deduction, "a man is only as old as his arteries." This so-called "hardening of the arteries" begins, in all of us, soon after reaching middle life: it becomes a disease only when unduly hastened.

Poe abandoned his home at Fordham and spent his last night in New York at the home of Mrs. Lewis. She thus describes his condition:

> He seemed very sad and retired early. On leaving next morning, he took my hands in his and, looking into my face said, 'Dear Stella, my much beloved friend, you truly understand and appreciate me. I have a presentiment that I never shall see you again. I must leave today for Richmond. If I never return write my life. You can and will do me justice.'

From New York Poe took a boat for Philadelphia. For the last time he saw Mrs. Clemm and she thus records his farewell promise:

God bless you, my own darling mother. Do not fear for your Eddy. See how good I will be while I am away from you, and will come back to love and comfort you.

Two days later Poe called at John Sartain's office in Philadelphia, suffering from a pronounced mental disturbance. He had delusions of persecution and believed that he was being followed by enemies who were attempting his destruction. Woodberry, quoting Sartain, thus describes his condition:

Poe went to Philadelphia, and, apparently after a day or two, entered the office of John Sartain, proprietor of 'Sartain's Magazine,' his friend for the past nine years, and exclaimed excitedly, 'I have come to you for refuge.' He was delirious and suffering from what seems to have been an habitual delusion in such attacks, a fear of a conspiracy against him. Sartain, who long remembered the visions about which Poe raved and the persistence with which he besought him for laudanum, reassured him, and cared for him some days, accompanied him when he went out, and brought him back; once Poe escaped and seems to have passed that night in an open field, but Sartain told the story with variations at different times; toward the end two other old friends assisted in caring for him.

John Sartain, the artist, in his "Reminiscences of a Very Old Man," published in 1900, recalled certain facts of his association with Poe. Apparently he was one of the few friends who actively assisted Poe during his last sickness, and he was familiar with the morbid nervous state that preceded Poe's death.

Sartain, describing this interview with Poe, writes:

'Mr. Sartain, I have come to you for refuge and protection; will you let me stay with you? It is necessary for my safety that I lie concealed for a time.' He said it would be difficult for me to believe what he had to tell, or that such things were possible in this nineteenth century. . . . He told me that he had been on his way to New York, but he had heard some men who sat a few seats back of him plotting how they should kill him and then throw him off from the platform of the car. He said they spoke so low that it would have been impossible for him to hear and understand the meaning of their words, had it not

been that his sense of hearing was so wonderfully acute. . . . From his fear of assassination his mind gradually veered around to an idea of self-destruction, and his words clearly indicated this tendency. . . . After a long silence he said suddenly, 'If this mustache of mine was removed I should not be so easily recognized; will you lend me a razor, that I may shave it off?'

He also related to Sartain his Moyamensing hallucinations, and he suffered from other delusions characteristic of the alcoholic delirium that unquestionably was the basis of his mental state.

Sartain says:

He said that he had been thrown in Moyamensing Prison for forging a check and while there a white female figure had appeared on the battlements and had addressed him in whispers. 'If I had not heard what she said,' he declared, 'it would have been the end of me.'

'An attendant asked me if I would like to take a stroll about the place. I might see something interesting and I agreed. In the course of our rounds on the ramparts we saw a cauldron of burning spirits. He asked me if I would not like to take a drink. I declined, but, had I said yes, I should have been lifted over the brim and dipped into the hot liquid, up to the lips like Tantalus. . . . So at last as a means to torture me and to wring my heart, they brought out my mother, Mrs. Clemm, to blast my sight by seeing them first saw off her feet to the ankles, then her legs to the knees, her thighs at the hips.'

On the second morning he appeared to have become so much like his old self that I trusted him to go out alone. After an hour or two he returned, and then told me that he had come to the conclusion that what I said was true, and that the whole thing was a delusion. He said his mind began to clear as he laid on the grass. While he lay thus the words he had heard kept running in his thoughts, but he tried in vain to connect them with the speaker, and so the light gradually broke in on his dazed mind and he saw that he had come out of a dream.

Woodberry, without justification, has aspersed Sartain's memory of these events. The nature of Poe's delusions and hallucinations was such as to give evidence of their truth. The suddenness of so serious an attack following the brief period of intoxication makes it most probable that the congested state of Poe's brain was primarily respon-

sible, although the nature of his mental symptoms is characteristic of delirium tremens. Insanity is not so precipitate either in its onset or in its recovery, such condition continuing, as a rule, for many weeks.

Sartain also bears testimony as to the small amount of intoxicant required to produce mental disturbance. He states that Poe was most easily overcome by even minute doses of alcohol and he relates conversations with Miss Clarke, who was on terms of intimacy with the Poe family, and whose father, T. C. Clarke, was his "Stylus" associate, to the effect that "Miss Clarke quotes her father as saying that 'it took less liquor to make a maniac of Poe than of any one he had ever known'."

The length of time that had elapsed after Poe left Fordham before he was found in this condition of delirium, is uncertain; yet it is necessary to know this in order that his disease may be properly diagnosed.

If Poe was normal when he left New York, and his mother, who watched over him so carefully, believed that he was in condition to start on a lecturing tour, this delirium could not have been the result of only two day's use of alcohol. There must have been an organic brain change for alcohol to have acted so quickly. Even without the use of any stimulant, this condition occasionally develops. We could possibly dignify it by the name of Melancholia, the preceding state having been a Melancholy. Whatever name we use, the indisputable fact remains that there was an organic congestion of the meninges of the brain. This condition could not have been altogether due to alcohol. It often does happen that after a prolonged debauch *delirium tremens* results, characterized by all the symptoms Poe's condition presented, but this comes only after an extended period of acute alcoholism, save in those cases where there has developed an organic cerebral degeneration. The opinion that it was due to an organc lesion

is strengthened by a communication made by Poe's cousin, Neilson Poe, who was present at Poe's death. He wrote:

> The history of the last few days of his life is known to no one so well as to myself. . . . I trust that I can demonstrate that he passed, by a *single indulgence*, from a condition of perfect sobriety to one bordering on the madness usually occasioned by long continued intoxication, and that he is entitled to a far more favorable judgment upon his last hours than he has received.

It is possible that a much longer period than has been estimated elapsed between Poe's leaving New York and his call upon Sartain. Woodberry puts it at a "day or two."

Such hallucinations are most frequent in delirium; the memory of the prison was as much a delusion as the hearing of a voice and the sight of a "white female figure" were hallucinations. Poe recovered from this attack, and spent some weeks in Richmond among his friends. He was kindly received and extensively entertained. His letters, however, show that he had not yet recovered.

> Oh, my darling mother, it is now three weeks since I saw you, and in all that time, your poor Eddy has scarcely drawn a breath except of intense agony. Perhaps you are sick or gone from Fordham in despair, or dead. . . . Oh, Mother, I am so ill while I write— . . . My valise was lost for ten days. At last I found it at the depot in Philadelphia, but they had opened it and stolen both lectures. All my object here is over unless I can recover them or rewrite one of them.

In another letter, written to Mrs. Clemm shortly after this, he says:

> You will see at once by the handwriting of this letter, that I am better—much better—in health and spirits. Oh if you knew how your dear letter comforted me! It acted like magic. Most of my sufferings arose from that terrible idea which I could not get rid of—the idea that you were dead. For more than ten days I was totally deranged, although I was not drinking one drop; and during this interval I imagined the most horrible calamities.

In spite of Poe's denials, alcohol probably precipitated this attack. Alcohol alone could not have produced such

hallucinations and delusions unless it had been continued two or three weeks, or had there not been, as a basis, a diseased cerebrum.

An opiate could not have produced this condition. We know of no better drug in melancholia—no matter how produced—than cumulative doses of opium.

In these diseased brain cells there is set up an abnormal brain psychology, the exact nature of which is still a matter of guesswork among psycho-pathologists.

At all events this changed mentality is accompanied, and I believe is caused, by excessive circulation of the blood in the brain, exciting both the centers of the special senses and the cells presiding over ideation. These technical explanations have no value further than as an aid in clearing up the condition of Poe at the time of his death.

Letters of Poe, written about this time, throw further light upon his mental condition:

> My dear, dear Mother—I have been so ill—have had the cholera, or spasms quite as bad, and can now hardly hold the pen.
>
> The very instant you get this come to me. The joy of seeing you will almost compensate for our sorrows. We can but die together. It is no use to reason with me now; I must die. I have no desire to live since I have done *Eureka*. I could accomplish nothing more. For your sake it would be sweet to live, but we must die together. You have been all in all to me, darling, ever beloved Mother, and dearest truest friend
>
> I was never really insane, except on occasions where my heart was touched. I have been taken to prison once since I came here for getting drunk. But then I was not, it was about Virginia.

Fortunately, Mrs. Clemm was far away at the time these thoughts, as here expressed, dominated Poe. Possibly many times before, while Mrs. Clemm was in active attendance upon him, these same ideas came to him. If so, she was in real danger. Homicidal mania such as this, especially when due to alcoholism, has not infrequently cost the lives not only of the patient but of those he loved and who most tenderly ministered to his needs.

It was during these Richmond days that Poe again met, wooed, and won Mrs. Shelton. At this same time he was arranging with Patterson for the Oquawka magazine. Evidently no suspicion of approaching death was disturbing him. It is probable that a temporary expansive state was alternating with the depression from which he had been suffering.

Mrs. Weiss writes:

> The knowledge of this weakness was by his own request concealed from me. All that I knew of the matter was when a friend informed me that 'Mr. Poe was too unwell to see us that evening.' . . . On the day following he made his appearance among us, but so pale, tremulous, and apparently subdued as to convince me that he had been seriously ill. On this occasion he had been at the 'Old Swan,' where he was carefully tended by Mrs. Mackenzie's family, but on a second and more serious relapse he was taken by Dr. Mackenzie and Dr. Gibbon Carter to Duncan Lodge, where during some days his life was in imminent danger. Assiduous attention saved him, but it was the opinion of the physicians that another such attack would prove fatal. . . . Dr. Carter relates how, on this occasion, he had a long conversation with him, in which Poe expressed the most earnest desire to break from the thralldom of his besetting sin, and told of his many unavailing struggles to do so.

Poe, in spite of these repeated attacks, was seriously considering marriage with Mrs. Shelton, but before he took this step he wished to bring Mrs. Clemm from New York. Again he ventured forth alone. No one can trace his movements from the time he left Richmond, in his effort to reach New York, until he was found insensible on the water front of Baltimore. In this condition he was removed to the Washington University Hospital, under the charge of Dr. J. J. Moran, where, on October 7, 1849, he died.

On his way north he stopped at Baltimore. Woodberry thus narrates the essential facts:

> Just as when in the summer of 1847 at Philadelphia he was saved by a friend, just as when in the summer of 1848 at Boston he was

saved by a friend, just as in the summer of 1849 he was saved by Burr, he had experienced one of those repeated attacks, worse at each return, and he had found no friend by to save him.

That Poe should have died alone and unfriended, deprived of the faithful nursing and devoted care that, on former occasions, had been given him by the woman he delighted to call "Dear, *Dear* Muddy," has proved a disastrous end to a life filled with misfortunes; and on his memory it has left an undeserved stain that years have deepened. This circumstance has been used by his enemies as proof of his profligate living and as the culminating evidence of a misspent life. Those who feared and hated him rejoiced, not only at the fact, but at the manner of his death.

Otherwise, no other name save that of Virginia would have been connected with Poe's and he might have passed into history as a shining example of connubial happiness that death itself could not dissever and the picture Harrison drew of Poe's mental sufferings, due to the death of Virginia, might have seemed to have had a better foundation in fact. Death would also have saved the poor old mother, who was so willing to sacrifice all personal feeling, the agony of anticipating a marriage feast set out with cold meats and decorated with cypress boughs. A few days later she was summoned to a different ceremony: abject poverty prevented even this journey.

Two weeks after Poe's death, his physician, Dr. Moran, wrote a fairly complete account of the facts of his death and described, with sufficient detail, its essential features.

When Poe was taken to the hospital he was unconscious and remained in that condition from five o'clock in the afternoon until three on the following morning.

To this state succeeded tremor of the limbs, and at first a busy but not violent or active delirium—constant talking and vacant converse with spectral and imaginary objects on the walls. His face was

pale and his whole person drenched in perspiration. We were unable to induce tranquility before the second day after his admission. Having left orders with the nurses to that effect, I was summoned to his bedside so soon as consciousness supervened and questioned him with reference to his family, his place of residence, relatives, etc. But his answers were incoherent and unsatisfactory. He told me, however, that he had a wife in Richmond (which I have since learned was not the fact), that he did not know when he had left the city nor what had become of his trunk of clothing. . . . Mr. Poe seemed to doze, and I left him a short time. When I returned I found him in a violent delirium, resisting the efforts of two nurses to keep him in bed. This state continued till Saturday evening (he was admitted on Wednesday), when he commenced calling for one 'Reynolds', which he did through the night until *three* on Sunday morning. At this time a very decided change began to affect him. Having become enfeebled from exertion, he became quiet and seemed to rest for a short time; then gently moving his head, he said 'Lord help my poor soul', and expired.

This is a simple and clear medical history. While it contains nothing that might hurt the mother, it does not attempt to minimize or explain away Poe's real condition on entrance, or to deny the delusions and hallucinations from which he suffered. It is an intelligent statement covering the details of a death due to brain inflammation, or engorgement.

It is unfortunate that Moran, in again writing on this subject, depended on his "senile memories." If any memory ever needed refreshing it was his, for, some thirty-five years later, he wrote another account which in no particular corresponds with the earlier one. In 1885, Dr. Moran published his much discussed "Defense of Edgar Allan Poe," giving the "Life, Character and Dying Declaration of the Poet."

Dr. Moran's "Defense" contains nothing that aids us in arriving at an understanding of Poe's mental state upon admission to the hospital nor the cause of his death. On the other hand it confuses because the details as remembered thirty-six years after Poe's death materially

differ from the report sent to Mrs. Clemm a few days after he died. The latter was a direct and simple statement of the facts without attempt at either extenuation or undue explanation; the former was impressionistic and reflects the halo of martyrdom and legend already collecting around the name of Poe. It is essentially a defense and admits no fact that might dim the memory of Poe. The name, in every mention of it, is capitalized, thus exhibiting the intense reverence in which the memory of his hero was held.

EDGAR ALLAN POE has been more misunderstood than any other poet of the recent past. While his life was beautiful and inspired, yet aspersed, his last moments had more of sublimity than that of any of his contemporaries. The author of gems so delicate as *Annabel Lee*, *The Raven*, and *Lenore*, while no less human and frail than others of his day, had a soul and heart that stamped him an offshoot of Divinity.

Much has been said and written in relation to this singular and most remarkable of all our poets, whose life has been an enigma to the world and whose death a mystery. The nature of his disease and how he died, up to the present day, remains a matter of doubt except so far as have been gathered from a few brief voluntary publications made by his physician. . . . Without vanity permit me to say I firmly believe that had they called upon me for statements as to when he died, I could have been instrumental in preventing his 'Dear Muddie,' Mrs. Maria Clemm, and his dear affianced, Mrs. Shelton, his first love, his *Annabel Lee*—from the sore afflictions and trials and heart burning that fell to their lot, and which in silence they endured. . . . Time speeds on and I repeat that thirty-five years have passed, and at this late period I am invited and urged to make known the facts so long desired in reference to his death. I am grateful to a kind Providence for having spared me to give the positive facts and unfold to the public mind much that had not been made known, and I hope to remove all doubt in respect to the uncertainty which has so long surrounded this part of POE'S history and life. I now proclaim to the world that he has been shamefully abused and misrepresented, that the habit of intemperance, which to some extent did cling to him in his earlier history, did not continue with him in his more mature life, and that what I

shall record, shall be a true, unvarnished story from personal intercourse for sixteen hours during his last illness, from his death-bed statements, from information received elsewhere, and from near and dear friends, those who knew him and loved him.

It was my sad duty as his physician to sit by his deathbed; to administer the cup of consolation; to moisten his parched lips; to wipe the cold death-dew from his brow; and to catch the last whispered articulations that fell from the lips of a being, the most remarkable, perhaps, this country has ever known. Let me entreat your thoughtful attention, therefore, to a plain, unvarnished story of a checkered life, and the strange and melancholy events that darkened the last hours of a dying genius.

"A tale I would unfold"—but, unfortunately, he had unfolded it some thirty-six years before, and apparently had forgotten to refold it. The report he now makes is so diametrically opposed to that contained in a letter to Mrs. Clemm immediately following Poe's death, that we must believe, influenced by his subject and entirely forgetting the facts, he has drawn up a story of "ratiocination" in an attempt to associate his own name with that of the immortal dead.

It is not a deliberate attempt to deceive; simply time had filled Moran's brain cells with "lime," and many of them had been absorbed. It is not to be believed that Dr. Moran actually sat for sixteen hours wiping the "death-dew" from the arched brow, or that he administered any cup of consolation, or even moistened the parched lips; this is all Southern hyperbole. It is what Moran might have done had Poe come back after thirty-five years with all his accumulated legends and his glorious reputation. Probably, as he related thirty-six years earlier—not knowing who Poe was, he turned him over to a nurse. His thirty-six-year-after statement, as far as it concerns the death of Poe, begins with a diagnosis given by the hackdriver that brought the dying man to the hospital:

'Where did you find this man?' 'On Light Street wharf, sir.' I said, 'dead drunk I suppose?' He replied, 'No, sir; he was a sick man, a very sick man sir.' Why do you think he was not drunk?' I asked. 'He did not smell of whiskey,' said the driver, 'he is too white in the face. I picked him up in my arms like a baby, sir, and put him in the hack.'

Little did I then think, that after thirty-five years I should be called upon to give a full account of POE'S death and to defend the man whom at that hour I believed to be drunk; and that man, the great American genius, whose name is now a household word.

In a few minutes POE threw the cover from his breast, and looking up asked the nurse, 'Where am I?' The nurse made no reply but rang for me. I attended the call immediately, and placing my chair by the side of the patient's bed, took his left hand in my own and with my right hand pushed back the raven black locks of hair that covered his forehead.

I asked him how he felt. He answered, 'Miserable.' 'Do you suffer much pain?' 'No.' 'Do you feel sick at the stomach?' 'Yes, slightly.' 'Does your head ache, have you any pain there?' putting my hand on his forehead. 'Yes.' 'Mr. POE, how long have you been sick?' 'Can't say.' . . .

The sick man said, 'Where am I?' 'You are in the hands of your friends,' I replied, 'and as soon as you are better, I will have you moved to another part of the house, where you can receive them.' He was looking the room over with his large dark eyes, and I feared he would think he was unkindly dealt with, by being put in this prison-like room, with its wired inside windows, and iron grating outside.

I now felt it necessary that I should determine the nature of his disease and make out a correct diagnosis, so as to treat him properly. I did not then know but he might have been drinking, and so as to determine the matter I said:

'Mr. POE, you are extremely weak, pulse very low; I will give you a glass of toddy.' He opened wide his eyes, and fixed them so steadily upon me, and with such anguish in them that I had to look from him to the wall beyond the bed.

He then said, 'Sir, if I thought its potency would transport me to the Elysian bowers of the undiscovered spirit world, I would not take it.'

'I will then administer an opiate, to give you sleep and rest,' I said. Then he rejoined, 'Twin sister, spectre to the doomed and crazed mortals of earth and perdition.'

I was entirely shorn of my strength. Here was a patient supposed to have been drunk, and yet refuses to take liquor. . . . I found there was no tremor of his person, no unsteadiness of his nerves, no fidgeting with his hands, and not the slightest odor of liquor upon his breath or person. I saw that my first impression had been a mistaken one. He was in a sinking condition, yet perfectly conscious.

Dr. Moran's account shows a marvelous memory for verbatim statements and minute details of events which had occurred thirty-six years previously; so circumstantial and *verbatim* were they that I am sure I could not have retained and repeated them thirty-six seconds after they were uttered.

This would be a trivial and uncalled for criticism did it not concern Dr. Moran's retraction of his statement made in the letter he wrote Mrs. Clemm a few days after Poe's death, while the facts were still fresh in his memory. According to this letter Poe was unconscious when admitted and remained unconscious for several hours; this was "succeeded by a tremor of the limbs, and a busy but not violent delirium." Dr. Moran also wrote that, when Poe was questioned with reference to his family, "his answers were incoherent and unsatisfactory. He told me however that he had a wife in Richmond." Further, he stated that Poe became violently delirious and sank into a stupor, dying without regaining consciousness. This renders all the more remarkable the following pen picture in the "Defense" of Poe's actions as well as a report of his last words:

I said, 'Mr. POE, you are in a critical condition, and the least excitement of your mind will endanger your life.' He said, 'Doctor, I am ill; is there no hope?' 'The chances are against you.' 'How long, oh! how long,' he cried, 'before I can see my dear Virginia, my dear Lenore!' I said to him, 'I will send for her or anyone you wish to see.' I knew nothing of his family or friends. I asked him, 'Have you a family?' 'No,' said he, 'my wife is dead, my dear Virginia. My mother-

in-law lives; oh! how my heart bleeds for her; she said when we last met and parted at Fordham, 'Eddie, I fear this will be our last meeting.' I said, 'Mr. POE, I will send or write to anyone you maydesire me.' 'Doctor,' said he, 'Death's dark angel has done his work. Language cannot express the terrific tempest that sweeps over me, and signals the alarm of death. Oh, God! the terrible strait I am in.' 'Shall I write to anyone for you?' 'Yes, Doctor, write to my mother-in-law, and Mrs.——— no, too late! Too late!'

Then he said, 'Write to both at once; write to my mother-in-law and tell her 'Eddie is here'—no, too late! Doctor, I must unbosom to you the secret of my heart, though dagger-like it pierces my soul. I was to have been married in ten days.'

He wept like a child, and even now I can see his pale face that told too plainly the depth of grief he felt, and the large tear drops forcing their way down the furrows of his pallid cheeks. I again asked, 'Shall I send for the lady?' 'No, write to both; inform them of my illness and death at the same time, and say that no conscious act of mine brought this great trouble upon me. How it happened that I am brought to this place, God only knows. My mind has kept no record of time; it seems a dream, a horrible dream.' I said, 'Mr. POE, my carriage is at the door; I will send for the lady.' 'No,' said he, 'write to Mrs. Sarah E. Shelton, Richmond, Va., and Mrs. Maria Clemm, Lowell, Mass.'

I remained by his side, watching every breath and movement of his muscles. He had *no tremor or spasmodic action* at this period, which was twelve hours from his entrance in the hospital. I noticed the color deepening upon his cheeks and forehead, blood vessels at the temple slightly enlarging. I ordered ice to his head and heat to his extremities, and waited in his room about fifteen minutes longer, observing no change except increase in the circulation. . . . POE continued in an unconscious state for half an hour, but when roused he was conscious. On visiting him again I found his pulse feeble, sharp, and very irregular. I took my seat by his bedside and closely watched him for twenty minutes at least; the pupils of his eyes were dilating and contracting. Death was rapidly approaching. Just at this moment my friend, Professor J. C. S. Monkur, came into the sick chamber. As soon as he fixed his eyes upon the patient he said, 'He will die; he is dying now.' After a careful examination, Dr. Monkur gave it as his opinion that POE would die from excessive nervous prostration and loss of nerve power, resulting from exposure, affecting the encephalon, a sensitive and delicate membrane of the brain. . . . He seemed to revive a little and

opening his eyes, he fixed them upon the window. He kept them unmoved for more than a minute. I have, since that time, been forcibly impressed with the wild fancies in that wonderful poem, *The Raven*. Did he hear a 'Gentle tapping at the window lattice,' and was his heart still a moment, 'this mystery to explore'? Did he see that stately raven 'perched upon his chamber door. Perched, and sat, and nothing more.' The dying poet was articulating something in a very low voice, and at length he spoke more audibly and said, 'Doctor, it is all over.' I then said, 'Mr. POE, I must tell you that you are near your end. Have you any wish or word for friends?' He said, 'Nevermore.'

At length he exclaimed: 'O God! Is there no ransom for the deathless spirit?' I said, 'Yes, look to your Saviour; there is mercy for you and all mankind. God is love and the gift is free.'

The dying man then said impressively, 'He who arched the heavens and upholds the universe, has His decrees legibly written upon the frontlet of every human being, and upon demons incarnate.'

I then consoled him by saying, 'He died for you and me and all mankind. Trust in His mercy.' . . .

The glassy eyes rolled back; there was a sudden tremor; and the immortal soul of EDGAR ALLAN POE was borne swiftly away to the spirit world.

This statement of Moran is somewhat more impressive than the one he made to Mrs. Clemm, viz.: that Poe continued calling for one "Reynolds," and was in violent delirium until the end, and that, as he died, he exclaimed: "Lord help my poor soul."

In this memoir Dr. Moran insists that Poe was in the hospital only sixteen hours before his death. In referring to this matter, he says:

A certain biographer has recently written that 'Poe was four days in a fit of delirium before he died,' and his cousin, Neilson Poe, is reported by this same writer to have said that he, Judge Poe, called to see him, but he was in such wild delirium that admission was refused; that he sent changes of linen, etc., to add to his comfort. I take this opportunity to assert that the statements are utterly untrue and without the slightest foundation.

In the letter to Mrs. Clemm immediately following Poe's death, Dr. Moran wrote:

When I returned I found the patient in a violent delirium, resisting the effort of two nurses to keep him in bed. This state continued until Saturday evening (he was admitted on *Wednesday*) when he commenced calling for one 'Reynolds' which he did all through the night until three on *Sunday* morning.

The only medical importance this description possesses is that the symptoms accompanying death to a certain extent elucidate the facts of causation; the letter to Mrs. Clemm supports the theory that Poe died of an organically diseased brain complicated by an intense meningeal congestion.

I agree with Moran that Poe did not die of alcoholism, nor was his death that of a drunkard; yet it is entirely possible that alcohol was the exciting cause. It is certain that meningeal irritation, due to brain congestion or inflammation—Moran seems to have kept no record as to whether or not there was fever—was the direct cause of Poe's death.

Moran was probably mistaken in his statement that Dr. Monkur's diagnosis was an "inflammation affecting the encephalon—a sensitive and delicate membrane of the brain." Such a definition would be in serious conflict with the authorities we now recognize. Probably the word that Moran intended to use was *meninges*. If this be the fact Dr. Monkur was correct.

Apparently it happened in the case of Poe, as in many similar cases, that there was a low grade of inflammation affecting the meninges, which, in all probability, had penetrated and partly disorganized the brain-matter, composed as it is of brain cells and their connecting processes. This was of long standing, and, even without the use of stimulants, might occasionally give evidence of brain irritation. Alcohol, in the slightest quantity, can set up serious irritation—occasionally active inflammation—among such morbid and diseased brain cells. Whether or not in this particular case alcohol precipitated inflammation or intense congestion is not essential for the diagnosis.

There is no reasonable doubt that the long continued use of alcohol by one who is predisposed, can produce this organic change. A simple debauch, with a brain not alcoholically diseased, rarely results in fatal delirium.

Poe's alcoholic excesses were something for which he was not responsible. His drinking was the result of hereditary compulsion. It was as much a part of him as was his peculiar intellect. If we praise him for his genius, and if his work has made for the world's happiness, as long as we cannot forget the evil thing that obsessed him and for which he paid the penalty, his faults should be condoned in the clear understanding that he cannot be held responsible for the transmitted neurosis.

A time will come when the judgment passed upon Poe must be reversed, but this can be done only when due consideration has been given the evidence concerning his neurosis, the hereditary compulsion from which he suffered, and the serious mental depression that was a part of his life history.

Early, often tragic, deaths are not unusual in men of genius. The life history of Napoleon and of other noted men who, at an early age, exhibited precocious mental capacity, have shown a corresponding early decline. Their failure, due to premature mental decay, was as marked as their early successes. Nature's method of compensation is one difficult to override or to avoid. This premature loss of brain power comes as an unalterable psychological law, although, as in the case of Poe, it may be hastened by alcoholic poisoning.

Genius is a divine flame that slowly burns and almost necessarily consumes those unduly endowed with this inheritance. There are few exceptions.

In no case can alcohol be regarded as a cause of intellectual preeminence or can it key its victims to the performance of notable accomplishments. Swinburne

has been quoted as proof of the fact that even genius may require alcoholic stimulation in order that its finest productions may be given birth. That Swinburne's productive power was lost when he ceased using intoxicants is only partly true. It is certainly not a fact that his creative conception was based on brain stimulation and that it ceased when no longer driven by alcoholic stimulants. The brain cells of both Swinburne and Poe refused to function, or functioned abnormally because of alcoholic abuse and senile decay, and no stimulant could restore to them their pristine vigor either of conception or of execution. They visualized only in an obscure medium "through a glass darkly."

Such "Visions" as typify this abnormal state are occasionally hallucinated, but only "the highest mounted mind" can give them expression:

I had a vision when the night was late;
A youth came riding toward a palace-gate.
He rode a horse with wings, that would have flown,
But that his heavy rider kept him down
And from the palace came a child of sin
And took him by the curls and led him in,
Where sat a company with heated eyes
Expecting when a fountain should arise.
A sleepy light upon their brows, and lips
Suffused them, sitting, lying, languid shapes,
By heaps of gourds, and skins of wine, and piles of grapes.

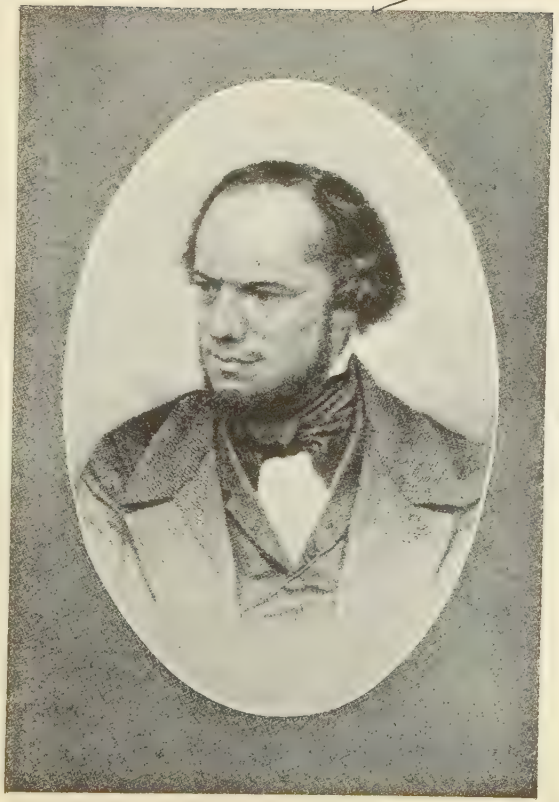
Then methought I heard a mellow sound,
Gathering up from all the lower ground;
Narrowing in to where they sat assembled,
Low voluptuous music winding trembled
Woven in circles. They that heard it sigh'd
Panted hand-in-hand with faces pale
Swung themselves and in low tones replied
Till the fountain spouted, showering wide
Sleet of diamond-drift, and pearly hail.

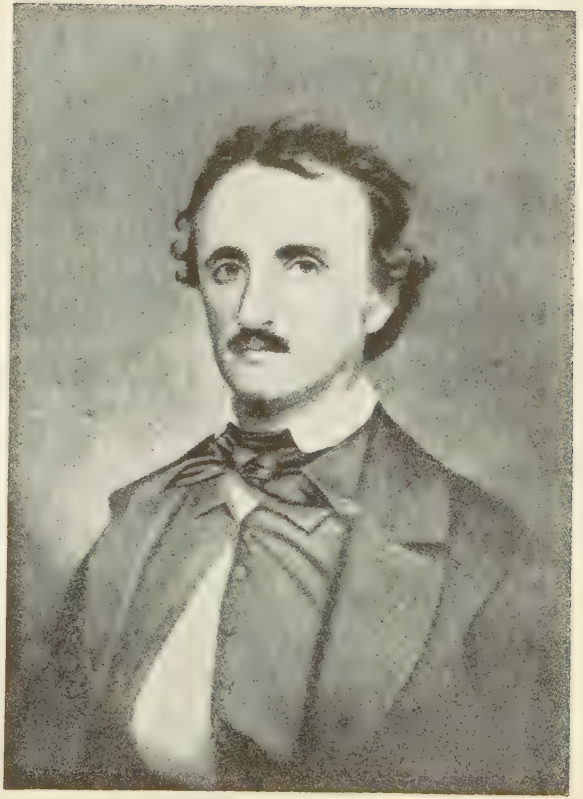
Then the music touched the gates and died
Rose again from where it seemed to fail,
Stormed in orbs of song, a growing gale;
Till thronging in and in, to where they waited,
As't were a hundred throated nightingale,
The strong tempestuous treble throbb'd and palpitated;
Ran into the giddiest whirl of sound
Caught the sparkles, and in circles,
Purple gauzes, golden hazes, liquid mazes,
Flung the torrent rainbow round.

. . . . . .

And then I look'd up toward a mountain-tract,
That girt the region with high cliff and lawn.
I saw that every morning, far withdrawn
Beyond the darkness and the cataract,
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn,
Unheeded; and detaching, fold by fold,
From these still heights, and, slowly drawing near,
A vapor heavy, hueless, formless, cold,
Came floating on for many a month and year,
Unheeded; and I thought I would have spoken,
And warn'd that madman ere it grew too late
But, as in dreams, I could not. Mine was broken,
When that cold vapor touch'd the palace-gate,
And link'd again. I saw within my head
A gray and gap-tooth'd man as lean as death,
Who slowly rode across a wither'd heath,
And lighted at a ruin'd inn. . . . .

This poem has been mis-named the "Vision of Sin." It should have been entitled a "Vision of Genius." It was neither the "child of sin" nor the "skins of wine" that wrought this moral and physical change—rather the inexorable law of destiny. From this "company with heated eyes" shut within the "palace-gates," intoxicated by "voluptuous music" that genius-gifted souls alone can hear, occasionally there bursts forth a song of immortal melody—the music of ages to come.





Section II. Poe's Critics

Such varying estimates have been given of Poe's moral character and so many differing statements have been made as to the facts of his life that it is difficult for his biographers to visualize the Man. Hypnotized by his brilliancy they have idealized, or swayed by personal enmities and influenced by hostile statements they have pilloried Poe for public scorn.

None of them have comprehended Poe's abnormal heredity, nor have they understood the morbid ills that were a part of his mental life in a way fairly to judge of the conditions under which much of his work was produced.

Poe's neurosis has been so exploited, and so marvelous and many sided was his genius, that it has been difficult for his critical biographers to classify him.

Was Poe the Jekyll of Gill or the Hyde of Griswold?

Biography, like photography, is a matter of skillful delineation. It can be successfully pursued only by one who is both an artist and an impressionist. More than a faithful re-presentation is required. A simple reproduction without a proper back-ground, lights, and shadows, is not regarded as the highest art, nor will the resulting portrait satisfy unless the individual negative has been retouched and the blemishes, which are a part of every human countenance, have been removed. The aging wrinkle that creases the forehead, the converging "crow's feet" that accusingly point to the *arcus senilis*, the wart that is slowly displacing the beauty-giving mole, even the statuesque pose we assume, and our attempt to look pleasant when the iron tongs grip our cranium—all these, as a

rule, are painstakingly removed; or, should the artist be no artist, are so modified that one may lose his individuality. Occasionally the photographer is compelled to take a side view because of some hideous deformity.

Should the photographer whom we have trusted to make our likeness be so careless as to finish and to mount the photograph as it comes from the camera, without retouching or in any way minimizing and disguising time's ravages or nature's handicap, we have a right to criticize the careless workmanship that was content to represent us with the disfiguring yet characteristic blemishes.

Griswold did not hesitate to freely express, in the Poe Memoir, his dislike of Poe and the reasons that induced him to flay his dead enemy; and he asserted his right to teach the world by holding up to obloquy the life of the man who had so seriously offended.

> Moreover, his career is full of instruction and warning, and it has always been made a portion of the penalty of wrong that its anatomy should be displayed for the common study and advantage.

I want no literary anatomist to dissect my inmost thoughts, or to explore my secret places—hidden even from myself—or to speculate on their untried possibilities, or to exhibit my organs as specimens of dextrous carving. If Nirvana be denied the spirit that animates me, and if my remains be refused the right of cremation, and if they must still cumber the earth and be pointed to as anatomical specimens for exhibition, at least let my body be filled with spices and my skin be softened with the balm of Gilead, and let me be wrapped in spikenard and myrrh as the kindly Egyptians embalmed those whom they loved.

The biographer occasionally minimizes faults, explains away defects, and, in time, may so idealize his subject, that we, who once knew him and loved him in spite of his frailties, who knew by experience his shortcomings

and the human side of him, may be pardoned if we do not at first glance recognize the unfamiliar pose and the retouched presentment. For this reason no biographer can satisfy who does not attempt, while giving the essential facts, so to Boswellize his subject as to free him from petty faults and minor weaknesses.

Occasionally, biographers have committed serious errors. I do not care for Froude who enumerated the dyspeptic foibles of Carlyle, nor do I uphold Trelawney who exhibited the antics of the half-mad Byron; above all I dislike Griswold who defamed the man whom he should have honored and who, for this reason, shall be known as the "*unfaithful servant who abused his trust.*"

Should the biographer deliberately pose his subject from the scar side, exhibiting all deformities and magnifying blemishes, at the same time touching out the features that do give individuality and the right to posterity's remembrance, he may no longer claim authority to represent, or to be associated with one he has so foully wronged.

Such an one was the Reverend Rufus Wilmot Griswold, who, by artifice and fraud, has so firmly and indissolubly connected his name with that of Poe, and in the preface to Poe's own works has made statements of such a character, so distorted when they bear the slightest semblance of truth, when not absolutely false so perverted as to be utterly misleading, that I cannot pass him over without discussion.

Griswold was a man of Poe's own age. He had no hereditary weaknesses, no compulsions, no obsessions, no genius. He had been a preacher.

I imagine him to have been a man strongly built, with a squat figure; square, flat, stubby fingers attached to a markedly prehensile, hairy hand; jutting brows surmounting small, close-set eyes that looked forth boldly and confidently; a long, flat nose with spreading alae, and a

prognathous jaw covered with a heavy beard which descended and became a part of his hairy chest. I cannot say that this picture, in outward form, more resembles Griswold's real features than the distorted moral picture he drew resembled Poe; yet God marks all of us. Beyond question there should have been some such physique to have contained the strong, sterling qualities, as well as certain moral obliquities that sometimes disfigure man. His countenance must have borne that sactimonious expression which Hogarth gave to the Puritan—of that man who has never, in public, committed a wrong action or thought a wrong thought. Such men we had when the inquisition flourished, when intolerance ruled our land and witches were burned, while old Cotton Mather from his pulpit urged on his flock to further deeds of righteousness.

Mrs. Whitman, recalling Poe's picture in the first volume of his collected works, says:

> The reader who has this volume in his hands, turns back musingly to look upon the features of the poet in whom resided such inspiration. But though well engraved, and useful as recalling his features to those who knew him with the angel shining through, the picture is from a daguerreotype and gives no idea of the beauty of Edgar Poe.

As to whether Poe was responsible when he requested Griswold to edit his works or, as a matter of fact, whether this request was ever made, will be discussed later. It is certain that at no time did Poe ask or expect Griswold to write a memoir to be published as an introduction to his collected writings.

This final tribute, which should properly introduce Poe to the world, if he required an introduction, had been assigned to Willis. At best it was to be perfunctory, as is usually the case when some personage addresses a small town audience, and the leading citizen is asked to take a seat upon the stage and make a few "introductory re-

marks." Should this introductory speech be filled with scathing denunciation reflecting on the speaker's past history, his morals, his manners, and branding him a felon, surely the introducer hardly would be thought to have carried out honorably his part of the function.

Griswold was a man experienced in literary criticism, with some pretension to the role of arbiter as to those things that should constitute contemporary American literature and that should be preserved; yet he was possessed of no originality or capacity further than that second-rate capacity for collecting and annotating the work of others. He had published a few sermons and had written some verse, but his chief literary activity had consisted in collecting, annotating, and associating his own name with the work of his contemporaries. He had edited anthologies of the American poets, and had compiled books. To him we must credit "Poetry and Prose Writers of America," as well as "Washington and His Generals," "Napoleon and His Marshals," "The Female Poets of America," and other publications of like caliber. He was also responsible for "The Cypress Wreath: A Book of Consolation for Those Who Mourn," and a "Biographical Annual, Consisting of Memoirs of Eminent Persons Recently Deceased." Certainly none of these works, either by title or contents, gave any evidence of the powers of vituperation that dwelt in the reverend gentleman. It is certain he would not have dared to write of Poe, living, as he did of Poe, dead.

Griswold had proposed to insert some of Poe's work in one of his anthologies—in fact it was in this way that Poe had made his acquaintance. Poe did not hesitate to criticize fully and freely "The Poets and Poetry of America," and to differ seriously with Griswold in his estimate of certain authors. It is also true that, because Griswold occupied the position vacated by Poe on "Graham's Magazine," as well as for other reasons, there had resulted a personal en-

mity. After Poe's death Griswold exhibited marked interest in the welfare of Mrs. Clemm, sympathized with her in her bereavement, and to her expressed friendship for Poe.

Had there been no reconciliation, it is impossible for me to conceive the innate vindictiveness of a man that would deliberately take such revenge on a dead foe. I prefer to believe that the man's mental caliber was so small and his moral fiber so coarse that he did not appreciate the nature and quality of his act or the enormity of this breach of trust, simply because he had none of the instincts that would have restrained a more gentle man. That there was some foundation for this personal assault and these distorted statements makes it the more unforgivable. Certain it is that many of Poe's literary acquaintances, although they had received over-severe criticism at his hands, or had suffered in a business way to a far greater extent than had Griswold, came to the defense of the memory of Poe, and forgot small antagonisms and personal misunderstandings in rehabilitating the good name of the man whom they regarded as their literary master.

If any of Poe's business associates had the right to complain, or to criticize certain acts and statements of Poe during his periods of irresponsibility, it was Graham of the "Graham's Magazine"; yet he, supported by Willis and other literary friends and associates, so bitterly denounced the death notice written by Griswold for the "New York Tribune," as to precipitate a controversy the echoes of which have not yet ceased to reverberate. Griswold exculpated himself by asserting that, at the time he wrote the "Tribune" sketch, he did not know that he had been appointed Poe's literary executor. It is not certain that he was so appointed. He had "heard" that Poe "had long been in the habit of expressing a desire that in the event of his death I should be his editor." It is not for this pre-

liminary sketch that Griswold's name is *anathema*. As a reviewer or commentator he had the right to express his opinion of Poe, although it might have been a more friendly act and one more in consonance with the dictates of decency and humanity had he foregone this right, considering their past differences and association. After accepting the editorship of Poe's writings Griswold was under no misconception as to the duties it entailed.

> I did not suppose I was debarred from the expression of any feelings or opinions in the case of the acceptance of this office, the duties of which I regarded as simply the collection of his works and their publication for the benefit of the rightful inheritors of his property, in a form and manner that would have probably been most agreeable to his own wishes.

In the "Tribune" article published a few days after Poe's death Griswold made slanderous statements that most seriously reflected on Poe's moral character, and retailed incidents that, to him, seemed to justify the assertion that while it might surprise many to learn of Poe's death, "but few would be grieved by it." Had this statement been the only offense no further notice would have been taken of it, especially as Griswold did not sign his own name but, for a good reason, chose "Ludwig" as a fit pseudonym to accompany this denunciatory obituary.

The Ludwig article began:

> Edgar Allan Poe is dead. He died in Baltimore the day before yesterday. This announcement will startle many, *but few will be grieved by it.*
>
> The poet was well known personally or by reputation, in all this country; he had readers in England, and in several of the States of Continental Europe; but he had few or no friends; and the regrets for his death will be suggested principally by the consideration that in him literary art lost one of its most brilliant, but erratic stars.

After briefly sketching Poe's early life, and the eminent respectability of "General Poe", as well as his relationship

to "Admiral McBride," Griswold gives an account of Poe's first literary adventure:

In 1832 the proprietor of a weekly gazette, in Baltimore, offered two premiums, one for the best story in prose, the other in poetry. . . Such matters are usually disposed of in a very off-hand way: committees to award literary prizes drink to the payer's health, in good wines over the unexamined MSS. which they submit to the discretion of the publisher, with permission to use their names in such a way as to promote the publisher's advantage. So it would have been in this case, but that one of the committee, taking up a small book in such exquisite chirography as to seem like one of the finest issues of the press of Putnam, was tempted to read several pages. Being interested he summoned the attention of the company to the half-dozen compositions in the volume. It was unanimously decided that the prizes should be paid to the first of geniuses who had written legibly. Not another MSS. was unfolded.

Poe, coming for his prize money, is described as:

Thin and pale, even to cadaverousness, his whole appearance indicated sickness and the utmost destitution. A tattered coat concealed the absence of shirt, and the ruins of boots disclosed more than the want of stockings.

On what foundation Griswold based his description, or whether it was altogether an imaginary sketch, cannot now be determined. This extract, as well as the first, was pronounced to be an overdrawn statement of the real facts, as occasionally is the newspaper way. Kennedy, Poe's discoverer and friend, did say that Poe excused himself from accepting an invitation to dinner, "for reasons of the most humiliating nature—my personal appearance." In his "Reminiscences of Poe," John H. Latrobe, another member of the committee that awarded Poe the prize offered by "The Saturday Visiter," gives the following description of Poe:

My office in those days was in the building still occupied by the Mechanics Bank, and I was seated at my desk on the Monday following the publication of the tale, when a gentleman entered and introduced himself as the writer, saying that he had come to thank me, as

one of the committee, for the award in his favor. Of this interview my recollection is very distinct indeed. . . . He was dressed in black, and his frock coat was buttoned to the throat, where it met the black stock, then universally worn. Not a particle of white was visible. Coat, hat, boots and gloves had very evidently seen their best days, but so far as mending and brushing go everything had been done, apparently, to make them presentable.

On most men his clothes would have looked shabby and seedy, but there was something about this man that prevented one from criticising his garments and the details I have mentioned were only recalled afterwards. The impression made, however, was that the award made in Mr. Poe's favor was not inopportune. *Gentleman* was written all over him. . . .

Dr. Griswold's statement 'that Mr. Kennedy accompanied him [Poe] to a clothing store and purchased for him a respectable suit, with a change of linen, and sent him to a bath,' is a sheer fabrication.

Describing Poe's personal appearance in the street, Ludwig wrote:

He was at times a dreamer—dwelling in ideal realms—in heaven or hell peopled with creations and the accidents of his brain. He walked the streets in madness or melancholy, with lips moving in indistinct curses, or with eyes upturned in passionate prayers, (never for himself, for he felt, or professed to feel, that he was already damned, but for their happiness who at the moment were objects of his idolatry;) or with his glance introverted to a heart gnawed with anguish, and with a face shrouded in gloom, he would brave the wildest storms; and all night with drenched garments and arms wildly beating the wind and rain, he would speak as if to spirits that at such times only could be evoked by him from the Aidenn close by whose portals his disturbed soul sought to forget the ills to which his constitution subjected him—close by the Aidenn where were those he loved—the Aidenn which he might never see but in fitful glimpses, as its gates opened to receive the less fiery and more happy natures whose listening to sin did not involve the doom of death.

This Ludwig article was bitterly criticised by John Neal, Poe's first literary sponsor, as well as by Graham, his long time associate, and by Willis, in his "Death of Edgar A. Poe", contained in the first volume. It was to amplify and to prove the basic truth of the Ludwig article that Gris-

wold wrote the memoir he prefixed to "The Literati." Evidently smarting under these criticisms, he entered more fully into details and extended his descriptions of Poe's misbehavior, adding many statements later proved to be false.

If, when Griswold wrote this first article he did not know he was to preside over Poe's literary remains, he certainly did know that, as editor and in complete control of Poe's collected works, by reproducing and amplifying his original charges he was holding up to obloquy a literary artist the latchet of whose shoe he was not worthy to touch.

He took advantage of this accidental relationship to besmirch the memory of one whom by all the codes of decency he was under obligations to shield. He attempted to prove that Poe was as evil and morally corrupt as he had described him in the Ludwig article. The unforgivable act was his insertion of this as a memoir prefacing Poe's collected works, so that they became the vehicle for carrying his defamatory statements to all the world; and, still worse, these scurrilous accusations unfortunately bore the imprint of authority.

It would have been better for the memory of both Poe and Griswold had Poe died somewhat earlier and been included in the "Memoirs of Eminent Persons Recently Deceased," or even in "The Cypress Wreath: The Book of Consolation for Those Who Mourn". Certainly it would have been better for Griswold, who did not confine himself to the villification of the dead but bitterly assailed those who had a good word for Poe and who were better acquainted with him through intimate business and personal relations. Quoting from Griswold's preface:

> My unconsidered and imperfect, but, as every one who knew its subject readily perceived, very kind article, was now vehemently attacked. A writer under the signature of 'George R. Graham' in a sophomorical and trashy but widely circulated Letter, denounced it as

'the fancy sketch of a jaundiced vision,' and 'an immortal infamy' and its composition '*a breach of trust.*' . . . And Mr. John Neal, too, who had never had even the slightest personal acquaintance with Poe in his life, rushes from a sleep which the public had trusted was eternal, to declare that my characterization of Poe is false and malicious, and that I am a 'caluminator,' a 'Rhadamanthus' etc., etc.

All this is contained in a sketch, preliminary to the memoir, which Griswold inserted, and proves that he did what he did deliberately, calculatingly, and in cold blood. He recognized and conceded Poe's genius and did not deny to him primacy as the greatest of American writers. This was an unnecessary concession, inasmuch as the volumes in which it was to appear spoke in Poe's own behalf. Although unnecessary, a literary estimate with propriety could have been inserted. Poe's writings and not his morals should have been the matter for discussion. Amongst Griswold's encomiums was a most malignant attack on Poe's moral life, and a determined attempt to blacken his character by introducing hostile statements—some apparently true, but in no way proper to be related if true; others absolutely false and malicious.

What Griswold did not dare to state definitely—and there was little he failed to allege—he introduced by insinuation and innuendo. In describing the final rupture between Poe and Allan he referred to some act which,

If true, throws a dark shade upon the quarrel, and a very ugly light upon Poe's character. We shall not insert it because it is one of those relations we think with Sir Thomas Browne, should never be recorded,—being 'verities whose truth we fear and heartily wish there were no truth therein . . whose relations honest minds do deprecate. For of sins heteroclitical, and such as want name or such precedent, there is ofttimes a sin even in their history. We desire no record of enormities; sins should be accounted new. They omit of their monstrosity as they fall from their rarity; for men count it venial to err with their forefathers and foolishly conceive they divide a sin in its society. . . . In things of this nature, silence commendeth history; 'tis the veniable

part of things lost; wherein there must never arise a Pancirollus, nor remain any register but that of hell.

Such rumors, even if they can be authenticated, should have no place in a memoir where their mere presence breeds contagion. Many statements in which Griswold reflects on Poe have been proved to be without foundation. In this particular case Poe, at worst, was under the influence of alcohol when he made some slighting remark to Mrs. Allan regarding this second marriage.

Griswold minimized nothing. In every instance where an immoral or even an indiscreet action was alleged, he made no allowance for the fact that Poe might not have been responsible. Many of his statements relate to incidents that occurred during the period of Poe's life when we know that his intellect was failing. It was not necessary that Griswold should have assumed an attitude toward the memory of Poe which did not fully represent his own judgment. Having undertaken the position of a literary executor, it was not his duty and should not have been his pleasure to exhibit in the worst light all the weaknesses and evil compulsions that exist in all of us. He certainly had no right to accept as a fact, and to include in this memoir, anything of a discreditable nature without the fullest investigation, and then only as an elucidation of the text. His own explanation does not render the matter, or the manner, of his memoir less offensive:

De mortuis nil nisi bonum is a common and an honorable sentiment, but its proper application would lead to the suppression of the histories of half of the most conspicuous of mankind; in this case it is impossible on account of the notoriety of Mr. Poe's faults; and it would be unjust to the living against whom his hands were always raised and who had no resort but in his outlawry from their sympathies. Moreover, his career is full of instruction and warning, and it has always been made a portion of the penalty of wrong that its anatomy should be displayed for the common study and advantage.

Few had more experience in biography and in the personal study of authors than this Griswold, but in the case of no other writer did he find it necessary to demonstrate anatomy or to preach a lesson to the world. Even this pious intention does not justify such an anatomization. Griswold thus sums up Poe's demerits:

> His harsh experience had deprived him of all faith, in man or woman. He had made up his mind upon the numberless complexities of the social world, and the whole system with him was an imposture. This conviction gave a direction to his shrewd and naturally unamiable character. Still, though he regarded society as composed altogether of villains, the sharpness of his intellect was not of the kind which enabled him to cope with villainy, while it continually caused him by overshots to fail of the success of honesty. He was in many respects like Francis Vivian, in Bulwer's novel of 'The Caxtons.' Passion, in him, comprehended many of the worst emotions which militate against human happiness. You could not contradict him, but you raised quick choler; you could not speak of wealth but his cheek paled with gnawing envy. The astonishing natural advantages of this poor boy—his beauty, his readiness, the daring spirit that breathed around him like a fiery atmosphere—had raised his constitutional self-confidence into arrogance that turned his very claims to admiration into prejudices against him. Irascible, envious—bad enough, but not the worst, for these salient angles were all varnished over with a cold repellant synicism [sic], his passions vented themselves in sneers. There seemed to him no moral susceptibility; and, what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little or nothing of the true point of honor. He had, to a morbid excess, that desire to rise which is vulgarly called ambition, but no wish for the esteem or the love of his species; only the hard wish to succeed—not shine, not serve—succeed, that he might have the right to despise a world which galled his self conceit.

In these words does Griswold close his self-appointed task of writing a memoir of Edgar A. Poe!

The standard by which Poe's actions and moral character were to be judged was established by Griswold and remained for many years the verdict on the man.

Although no one attempted any thorough study either of

Poe's life or his writings, there frequently appeared among short biographical sketches and in the prefaces to Poe's works references to his life, the main facts of which were usually based on Griswold's statements. These for many years remained unquestioned by the reading public, in spite of monographs either protesting against unfair judgments or filled with denials so general that they did not cover all the facts. These partisan statements in no way lessened the settled conviction as to Poe's immoral life. Gradually the belief became firmly established that, in spite of its brilliancy, possibly because of it, all of Poe's work was the reflex of a brain diseased or drugged. Some of Poe's contemporaries and close associates, such as Briggs of the "Broadway Journal," added their testimony to that of Griswold. In the preface to an early illustrated English edition of Poe's works, published in 1858, Briggs prefaced the "Poems" with this statement:

> A close study of his works will reveal the fact, which may serve in some degree to remove this embarrassment, that there is nowhere discoverable in them a consciousness of moral responsibility. . . . The Lenore whose loss he deplored, was a being fair to the eye, like Undine, without a soul. . . . Some of the biographers of Poe have been harshly judged for the view given of his character, and it has naturally been supposed that private pique led to the exaggeration of his personal defects.
>
> But such imputations are unjust: a truthful delineation of his career would give a darker hue to his character than it has received from his biographers. In fact he has been more fortunate than most poets in his historians. Lowell and Willis have sketched him with a gentleness and a reverent feeling for his genius: and Griswold, his literary executor, in his fuller biography, has generously suppressed much that he might have given.

This Briggs is one, among others, whom Griswold so considerately shielded from the sting of Poe's sarcasms when, as editor of Poe's collected works, he rewrote and softened Poe's estimate of "Harry Franco," the *nom de plume* under which Briggs wrote. Briggs' gratuitous insult

to Poe was a tribute paid to the kindness of Griswold by one whom the latter had considerately protected.

The statements of Griswold and his friends have been accepted without question by European critics. We may take pride in the fact that Poe is recognized by them as a great story teller and poet, and that, in their estimation, he ranks with *certain* of their writers—not with those whom they most highly regard. This toleration and recognition is, however, tinctured with a certain condescension. The estimates of his character, and of the things he wrote, are not pleasant reading. This attitude was taken not for the reason that Poe was an American, but because, being the man he was both by reason of his strength and his weaknesses, he was misunderstood and misrepresented. That this was done ignorantly and not viciously does not make it more excusable. For this reason, I will mention certain of the foreign biographers before resuming a discussion of those who, in recent years, have elucidated the facts.

In England Poe was regarded as a monster of vice. The details of his life were said to be so shocking that they could only be suggested. He was classed among the degenerates, or worse.

The "London Athenaeum," gave this judgment:

> In most of Edgar Poe's tales there is either an extravagance, as though they had been written by a man on the verge of *delirium tremens*, or else a labored monotony, as though his resources were beginning to run dry. The poems, with their strange unwholesome vigor (if such things can be) speak for themselves. Their writer, apart from his works, had best be forgotten. Edgar Poe's stories seem, all of them, to have been written under the inspiration of gin-and-water.

The first Englishman who attempted to stem this flood of ignorant criticism was Hannay, but his assertions were met with jeers of derision. Even at the present time Poe is not judged so kindly, nor are his works so fully appreciated as they are in America and France.

"Fraser's Magazine" of August, 1857, contained a criticism of Poe based on a review of "The Poetical Works of Edgar Allan Poe: With a Notice of his Life and Genius. By James Hannay":

We must go back to the days of the early dramatists—of Marlowe, Dekker, Ford, Massinger, and Otway—before we shall find any parallel to the wild and morbid genius and the reckless and miserable life and death of Edgar Allan Poe. Never was there a sadder story than that of this wayward and infatuated youth, his wasted opportunities, his estranged friends, his poverty stricken manhood, his drunken degradation, his gradual sinking lower and lower into the depths of profligacy and misery till at last he died of *delirium tremens* at the early age of 39. And his poetical genius, his extraordinary analytical powers, his imagination that revolved in the realm of the awful, the weird and the horrible; his utter lack of truth and honor, his inveterate selfishness, his inordinate vanity and insane folly—all go to make a picture so strange, so sad, that it cannot be easily forgotten. This volume unhappily sets out with a biographical notice of Poe, written by Mr. James Hannay, which we have read with considerable surprise. Should any man of sense and taste, not acquainted with Poe, be so unfortunate as to look on Mr. Hannay's preface before reading the poetry, it is extremely probable that he will throw the book into the fire in indignation at the self conceit and affected smartness by which the preface is characterized.

Hannay's defense was rather apologetic and was by no means fulsome in its praise of Poe.

In 1858, the "Edinburgh Review" reviewing Griswold's four-volume publication, again expressed the English estimate of Poe. It was still more bitter in its denunciation of his life and work, elaborating Griswold's charges and magnifying his assertions as to Poe's irresponsible actions.

Edgar Allan Poe was incontestably one of the most worthless persons of whom we have any record in the world of letters. Many authors have been as idle; many as improvident; some as drunken and dissipated; and a few, perhaps, as treacherous and ungrateful; but *he* seems to have succeeded in attracting and combining, in his own person, all the floating vices which genius has hitherto shown itself

capable of grasping in its widest and most eccentric orbit. Yet his chances of success at the outset of life were great and manifold. Nature was bountiful to him; bestowing upon him a pleasing person and excellent talents. Fortune favored him; education and society expanded and polished his intellect, and improved his manner into an insinuating and almost irresistible address. Upon these foundations he took his stand; became early very popular among his associates, and might have erected a laudable reputation, had he possessed ordinary prudence. But he defied his good genius. There was a perpetual strife between him and virtue, in which virtue was never triumphant. His moral stamen was weak, and demanded resolute treatment; but instead of seeking a bracing and healthy atmosphere, he preferred the impurer airs, and gave way readily to those low and vulgar appetites, which infallibly relax and press down the victim to the lowest state of social abasement. The usual prizes of life—reputation, competency, friendship, love—presented themselves in turn; but they were all in turn neglected or forfeited—repeatedly, in fact, abandoned under the detestable passion for drink. He outraged his benefactor, he deceived his friends, he sacrificed his love, he became a beggar, a vagabond, the slanderer of a woman, the delirious drunken pauper of a common hospital—hated by some, despised by others, and avoided by all respectable men. He was, as we have said, a blackguard of undeniable type. We say all this very unwillingly; for we admire very sincerely many things that Mr. Poe has produced. We are willing to believe that there may have been, as Mrs. Osgood has stated, an amiable side to his character and that his mother-in-law had cause to lament his loss. We learn, moreover, from Mr. Willis, that at one time, in the latter portion of his life, 'he was invariably punctual and industrious.' The testimony of that gentleman and of Mr. Lowell (both men of eminence in literature), tempted us at first to suspend our opinion of the author; but the weight of evidence on the darker side proved overwhelming, and left us no choice but to admit and to stigmatize with our most decided reprobation those misdeeds that seem to have constituted almost the only history of his short career. His was, as Mr. Griswold states, a 'shrewd and naturally unamiable character.' We refuse our assent to the argument of one of his advocates, that 'his whole nature was reversed by a single glass of wine.' We lean to the ancient proverb, which asserts that Truth is made manifest upon convivial occasions.

The writer suggests a curious revival of the "Longfellow War" by the following statement:

We are not able to ascertain the precise date at which he borrowed a poem from Professor Longfellow, imitated it, and afterward *denounced the author as a Plagiarist from himself, the Simulator.* The mimic poem is called 'The Haunted House,' and is one of Poe's best pieces of verse. The original is 'The Beleaguered City,' of Mr. Longfellow.

It is probable that by *The Haunted House*, this reviewer intended to name Poe's *The Haunted Palace*, and that he might have confused this poem with *The Deserted House* of Tennyson;—one typifying a disordered mind, the other, death. That either bears the slightest resemblance to *The Beleaguered City*, is not possible. If one of these poems suggested, or was the prototype of the other, the originator was Poe. *The Haunted Palace* was published in "The American Museum" for April, 1839, and it is certain that Poe never borrowed a manuscript from Longfellow. *The Beleagured City* was also published in 1839 but after the appearance of the *The Haunted Palace*.

The one-sidedness of the delineation of Poe seems to have impressed the reviewer and, while he does not question Griswold's statements, he seems to feel conscious of the possibility of the existence of a germ of good—if only it could be discovered:

We feel, even in the case of Mr. Poe, that it would have been desirable if a fuller biography had accompanied his works. Honest and able, so far as it goes, it leaves us without information on many matters from which much might have been gathered to form an accurate judgment. Perhaps, after all, we are copying the deformities only of the man, at a time when we are anxious to submit all that was good as well as all that was bad. The roughnesses that were so conspicuous on the surface of Poe's character would naturally attract the notice of his biographer in the first instance. But, underneath, was there nothing to tell of?—no cheeriness in the boy—no casual acts of kindness—no adhesion to old friendships—no sympathy with the poor and unhappy, that might have been brought forward as indicative of his

better nature. . . . For no man is thoroughly evil. There must be slumbering virtues—good intentions undeveloped—even good actions, claiming to have a place on record. . . . The influence of his faults were limited, and the penalty he alone had to bear. But the pleasure arising from his writings has been shared by many thousand people. In speaking of himself personally, we have felt bound to express our opinions without any subterfuge. But we are not insensible that, while he grasped and pressed hardly upon some individuals with one hand, with the other he scattered his gifts in abundance to the public.

This ignorant and scurrilous review was approvingly copied by the editor of "The Ladies' Repository" a monthly periodical devoted to literature and religion, also edited by a preacher, the Rev. D. W. Clark, D. D.

Griswold had won his case and had fully established the facts on which he had based his "unconsidered and imperfect but, as everyone who knew its subject readily perceived, very kind article."

The reverend gentleman had found the one method by which his prejudiced, untrue, and vicious statements could be disseminated equally with Poe's immortal works —possibly the only method, for none could read the one without seeing the other.

In assuming the truthfulness of Griswold's statement in preference to those of Lowell and Willis, this reviewer evidently believed that, in inserting a "Memoir," of Poe into his collected works, at least that Griswold had not magnified Poe's faults but that he had performed a painful duty. For this reason no odium was attached to Griswold because of his arraignment of Poe and it was believed that his criticisms had been as kindly as could have been made, considering the offensiveness of the subject.

Among foreign critics, the writings of Poe have appealed especially to those of France, and it is among the French that his earliest and most earnest literary admirers were found. It is also among French writers that the

Griswold charges have been most generally accepted, yet they did not detract from the pleasure Poe's work gave his French readers; but that they have misunderstood and misjudged Poe, the man, is a serious matter.

Even in America, the high position assigned to Poe is occasionally questioned. Sometimes he is called "decadent" because, probably, a certain French School has enthusiastically praised his work. At one time America hesitated to accept him as she did Cooper and Irving—and Walt Whitman. Poe is a writer without a country, and no nation, nor age, nor period, may claim him.

Although Poe found favor with the French and, before his death, was regarded by certain French writers as a master, the majority of their critics wonder and admire, but they do not accept him as a peer in comparison with their best writers. Nowhere has he been more severely condemned.

His followers have proved his worst enemies, for their praises rest on certain of his qualities that are most abnormal. Neither his life nor many of his best qualities have been fairly exhibited. Rather, they have set forth his abnormalities, and they have made of him a monster—at least a spectacle to be imitated by some, but to be shunned by all who are not classed among the decadents. His chief exponent, Baudelaire, who translated his work and who set him up as a divinity, to be invoked and to be worshipped as a god, has seriously injured the standing of Poe among the greater French writers.

As far as Baudelaire and his school are concerned, the things they admire and hold to be excellent render explanations unnecessary.

Baudelaire apparently regarded Griswold's criticism of Poe as typically American, and that it was in consonance with our national standards.

Baudelaire dimly realized that Poe was born with an in-

heritance, perhaps not of evil, but one that was fraught with disaster. He psychologizes:

There are, in the history of literature, many analogous destinies of actual damnation,—many men who bear the word *Luckless* written in mysterious characters in the sinuous folds of their foreheads. The blind angel of Expiation forever hovers around them, punishing them with rods for the edification of others. It is in vain that their lives exhibit talents, virtues or graces. Society has for them a special anathema, accusing them even of those infirmities which its own persecutions have generated. What would Hoffman not have done to disarm Destiny? what Balzac not attempted to compel Fortune? Does there, then, exist some diabolic Providence which prepares misery from the cradle; which throws, and throws with premeditation, these spiritual and angelic natures into hostile ranks, as martyrs were once hurled into the arena? Can there, then, be holy souls destined to the sacrificial altar, compelled to march to death and glory across the very ruins of their lives? Will the nightmare of gloom eternally besiege these chosen souls? . . . Their destiny is written in their very constitution; sparkling with a sinister brilliancy in their looks and in their gestures; circulating through their arteries in every globule of their blood. . . . I bring today a new legend to support this theory; today, I add a new saint to the holy army of martyrs, for I have to write the history of one of those illustrious unfortunates, over-rich with poetry and passion, who came after so many others, to serve in this dull world the rude apprenticeship of genius among inferior souls.

A lamentable tragedy this Life of Edgar Poe! His death a horrible unravelling of the drama, where horror is besmutched with trivialities! All the documents I have studied strengthen me in the conviction that the United States was for Poe only a vast prison through which he ran, hither and thither, with the feverish agitation of a being created to breathe in a purer world [Paris?], only a wild barbarous country—barbarous and gas-lit—and that his interior life, spiritual as a poet, spiritual even as a drunkard, was but one perpetual effort to escape the influence of the antipathetical atmosphere. . . . We might say that from the impious love of Liberty has been born a new tyranny—the tyranny of fools—which, in its insensible ferocity, resembles the idol of Juggernaut.

Neither Baudelaire nor certain of his *confreres* were in a position to throw stones even had they been so inclined. Accepting as true all that Griswold alleged, they only made

answer, "What Then?" Certainly it was not Poe who was at fault, but this "*parvenue nation,*" incapable of appreciating genius.

Once more I repeat my firm conviction that Edgar Poe and his country were never upon a level. The United States is a gigantic and infantine country, not unnaturally jealous of the old continent. Proud of its material development, abnormal and almost monstrous, this newcomer into history has a *naive* faith in the all-powerfulness of industry, being firmly convinced, moreover, like some unfortunates amongst ourselves, that it will finish by devouring the devil himself. Time and money are there held in extraordinary esteem; material activity, exaggerated almost to the proportions of a national mania, leaves room in their minds for little that is not of the earth.

Baudelaire attempted no critical discussion either of the facts of Poe's life or of his works, and accepted everything that related both to his private life and to all he wrote, as that of a master, though a master overwhelmed with drugs and drink:

Now, it is incontestable that, like those fugitive and striking impressions—most striking in their repetition when they have been most fugitive—which sometimes follow an exterior symptom, such as the striking of a clock, a note of music, or a forgotten perfume, and which are themselves followed by an event similar to the event already known, and which occupy the same place in a chain previously revealed—like those singular periodical dreams which frequent our slumbers—there exist in drunkenness not only the entanglements of dreams, but whole series of reasonings, which have need to reproduce themselves, of the medium which has given them birth. If the reader has followed me without repugnance, he has already divined my conclusion. I believe that, in many cases, not certainly in all, the intoxication of Poe was a mnemonic means, a method of work, a method energetic and fatal, but appropriate to his passionate nature. The poet has learned to drink as the laborious author exercises himself in filling note books. He could not resist the desire of finding again those visions, marvelous or awful—those subtle conceptions which he had met before in a preceding tempest; they were old acquaintances which imperatively attracted him, and to renew his knowledge of them, he took a road most dangerous, but most direct. The works that give us so much pleasure today were, in reality, the cause of his death. . . .

Upon the heart of this literature, where the air is rarified, the mind can feel that vague anguish, that fear prompt to tears, that sickness of the heart, which dwells in places vast and strange. Like our Eugene Delacroix, who has elevated his art to the height of grand poetry, Edgar Poe loves to move his figures upon a ground of green or violet where the phosphorescence of putrefaction, and the odour of the hurricane, reveal themselves. Nature inanimate participates of the nature of living beings, and, like it, trembles with a shiver, supernatural and galvanic. Space is fathomed by opium; for opium gives a magic tinge to all the hues, and causes every noise to vibrate with the most sonorous magnificence. Sometimes glorious visions, full of light and color, suddenly unroll themselves in its landscape; and on the furthest horizon line we see oriental cities and palaces, mist covered, in the distance, which the sun floods with golden showers.

Baudelaire may speak for himself and his school; these apparently looked for inspiration to such sources, and imitated the "Germanic horrors" occasionally indulged in by Poe; however, I would like to have the prescription for the mixture, or know the brand of the beverage, that inspired Poe when at his best. Drink and drugs, after their first stimulating or soothing effect, stupify. Their only value is in reviving those physically exhausted and in relieving mental unrest. They merely stimulate and distort.

Again quoting from Baudelaire:

Diderot is a blood-red author; Poe is a writer of the nerves—even something more—and the best I know. . . . No man has told with greater magic the *exceptions* of human life and nature, the ardors of the curiosities of convalescence, the close of seasons charged with enervating splendors, sultry weather, humid and misty, where the south wind softens and distends the nerves, like the chords of an instrument; where the eyes are filled with tears that come not from the heart; hallucinations at first giving place to doubt, soon convinced and full of reasons as a book; absurdity installing itself in the intellect, and governing it with a crushing logic; hysteria usurping the place of will, a contradiction established between the nerves and the mind, and mien out of all accord expressing grief by laughter. He analyzes them where they are most fugitive; he poises the imponderable, and describes in that minute and scientific manner, whose effects are terrible, all that

imaginary world which floats around the nervous man, and conducts him on to evil.

Although Baudelaire did not deny any of Griswold's allegations—he had not the facts, nor did he feel the necessity of any explanation—he did resent, with Gallic venom, the use Griswold made of his editorial authority:

> The *pedagogue vampire* has defamed his friend at full length in an enormous article—wearisome and crammed with hatred—which was prefixed to the posthumous edition of Poe's works. Are there then no regulations in America to keep curs out of cemeteries?

Baudelaire's concludes:

> The characters of Poe, or rather *the* character of Poe, the man with sharpened faculties, the man with nerves relaxed, the man whose ardent and patient will bids defiance to difficulties, whose glance is steadfastly fixed, with the rigidness of a sword, upon objects that increase the more, the more he gazes—this man is Poe himself; and his women, all luminous and sickly, dying of a thousand unknown ills, and speaking with a voice resembling music, are still himself; or, at least, by their strange aspirations, by their knowledge, by their incurable melancholy, they participate strongly in the nature of their creator. As to his ideal woman—his *Titanide*, she reveals herself under different names, scattering in his, alas! too scanty poems, portraits, or rather modes of feeling beauty, which the temperament of the author brings together, and confounds in a unity, vague but sensible, and where, more delicately, perhaps, than elsewhere, glows that insatiable passion for the beautiful which forms his greatest claim, that is to say, the essence of all his claims, to the affection and respect of poets.

Baudelaire may find all this apropos of Poe, but where he made this discovery, or what his reasons are for drawing these deductions, puzzles me. I surmise that such conclusions were the result of a vermuth dream.

Another Frenchman, Émile Lauvrière, has placed upon Poe a brand more disfiguring than was that of Griswold; for it has been assumed that his statements were made after a careful investigation of all facts, and by a man competent to pass upon the psychology of Poe.

Lauvrière is a "Docteur ès lettres" and "Professeur

agrègè au lycèe Charlemagne." In 1904 he wrote a critical study of the Life and Works of Poe, in which he attempted an "Étude de Psycologie Pathologique" as it related to Poe's abnormal mental state.

Lauvrière's book extends over seven hundred pages. The first three hundred deal with Poe's life; the other four hundred contain a discussion of his writings.

In both the first and second divisions of this critical study, Lauvrière has formulated theories by which he attempts to solve certain problems of Poe's life, and to explain the peculiarities which he believes to be characteristic of much that Poe wrote. Accepting as true all that Griswold alleged, Lauvrière has attempted to establish a thesis that demonstrates an inter-relation between the abnormalities described and the things that he asserts Poe wrote during the time that his brain was poisoned by stimulants, or narcotized by drugs.

His conclusion that Poe became a "madman" because of a primarily disordered brain, diseased but stimulated by alcohol or hallucinated by opium, requires investigation.

Because of the fact that this book was written before the publication of either Harrison's or Woodberry's biographies, Lauvrière has adopted as his authority the memoir by Griswold, and corroborates it by quotations from Briggs. The contributions of Ingram and Gill have been ignored; apparently they did not fit into his theory. His assertion that Poe's work is merely the manifestation of a disordered brain deserves special consideration:

> Before we continue the narrative of this hopelessly foredoomed life let us, for a moment, examine his contemporary work. We will find there the same pathetic role played by the same individual, whose haggard countenance is stamped by the imminence of insanity. [les traits à peine accentués prédisent l'immimnence de la folie.] Always there is presented the same morbid hero, with his haggard, disease-stamped face, haunted by specters; a Poe prematurely aged and debilitated, who, stupified, sees in his own pages, as in a mirror, a

reflection of himself as he awaits the fate to which he is doomed. The same exaggerated sensibility, the same overstrung nerves, the same profoundly unbalanced and over-excited imagination, the legacy of a decadent family which had been noted for the vigor of its imagination and for the ardor of its passions, and which, finally, because of the constitutional evil, manifested itself in a swarm of abnormal sensations; the same inconsistency; the same incoherence arising because of his inability to overcome an habitual timidity, [même inconsistance même incohérence qui vient de futiles efforts pour vaincre une trépidation habituelle] with excessive nervous agitation showing itself by trembling and broken voice, or, brusque and hoarse and perfectly modulated, such as one finds in the hopeless drunkard, or in the incorrigible eater of opium. Why should one further seek to penetrate into this habitual and excessive reserve, into this dark and unbearable sorrow which reproduces itself over all that he sees in the physical universe, or in our moral nature, and which over them constantly casts its gloomy shadows? Those inconceivable and mysterious obsessions of terror and horror have, like an incubus, settled on his heart causing him baseless alarms. It is into this pitiful condition he sinks when, in that last hour of life, he loses his reason and must face a horrible phantom of fear.

Sometimes, with staring eyes, in an attitude of profound attention, he gazes into vacancy as if he were listening to imaginary voices, again his eyes glow with mad hilarity attempting to hold in check an hysterical seizure in which the wild saraband dance of delirious and inchoate sensations, maddened even to crime, which rise in the sick brain like the nightmare of a madman, when they are aroused and throw themselves into the whirling dance, led by those two macaber and satanic demons: Alcohol and Opium.

It is difficult to understand Lauvrière's application—this dizzy dance led by macaber demons, these resounding words and misapplied metaphors—either to Poe or to the things he wrote. Apparently, in Lauvrière's mind, opium, alcohol, madness and Poe were inextricably mixed, and his portrait betrays this to such an extent that we fail to recognize in the likeness the slightest resemblance to the Poe we know, the Poe of whom even Griswold wrote, "His beauty, his readiness, the daring spirit that breathed around him like a fiery atmosphere." No testimony exists

either in the known facts of Poe's life or in the description all biographers give of his personal charm and the brilliancy of his conversation, or yet in the things he wrote, that would justify these over-statements. It is most difficult to understand Lauvrière's reason for describing Poe: *Tantôt il reste pendent des heures, les yeux fixés dans l'égarment, en une attitude de la plus profonde attention comme s'il prètait l'oreille á des bruits imaginaries;* or his reason for assuming that this was a reproduction of the sensations that haunted Poe's mind.

In *Berenice* Poe wrote:

> To muse for long unwearied hours, with my attention riveted to some frivolous device on the margin or in the typography of a book; to become absorbed, for the better part of a summer's day, in a quaint shadow falling aslant upon the tapestry or upon the floor; lose myself, for an entire night, in watching the steady flame of a lamp or the embers of a fire; to dream away whole days over the perfume of a flower; to repeat, monotonously, some common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition, ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind; to lose all sense of motion or physical existence, by means of absolute quiescence long and obstinately persevered in: such were a few of the most common and least pernicious vagaries induced by a condition of the mental faculties, not, indeed, altogether unparalleled, but certainly bidding defiance to anything like analysis or explanation.

This extract from Berenice does not justify Lauvriere's deductions nor will it explain *l'effroyable sarabande de sensations incohérentes, déliriantes, affolées jusqu'au crime.* This description was merely a day dream of the mentally indolent, and it well describes the auto-hypnotization into which all of us fall when we sink into revery.

A study of the *data* upon which Lauvrière based this and other statements, and from which he drew his conclusions, makes it certain that such verbiage is not all French exaggeration, nor was this description written for literary effect. He was sincere in his beliefs, but his conclusions were based partly on untruthful allegations and partly on

failure to understand scientific statements that can be variously interpreted. For this reason, it is proper that we know what was the foundation of his knowledge, and what were the scientific truths on which he based his conclusions. Lauvrière describes the preparation he made for his special study:

When discussing such a condition, ordinarily one will say 'Bah! c'est un malade,' and passes on. But we did not care to side-step this question. We wished with a clear conscience personally to investigate this matter, and to discuss it intelligently, and remembering that Poe was a sick man, or, as Briggs expressed it, 'a psychological phenomenon,' it occurred to us that a study of medicine would be necessary and that, possibly, a physician could furnish the key to this startling enigma that conjoined Poe's life and his work.

As our first inducement to begin on this study, a thing we little foresaw when we entered upon this work, was the intermittent nature, and frequent repetition of the brutal alcoholic attacks that were so prominent a symptom in the disease of this poor poet. All the symptoms of degeneration were so deeply graven in the flesh and soul of Poe, they show as plainly in his poor haggard face, the face of an inspired vagabond, as they do in the pages of his immortal prose and verse. Mentally, as well as physically, this degeneration has left its indelible mark upon his whole being. This explains all his abnormalities; his strength and his weakness; his genius and his madness; his defeats and his victories; without them his life and his work resemble monstrosities void of understanding; [monstruosites vides de sens] with them there is no more mystery; everything is made clear, logical and harmonious. Although this extremely simple explanation of the complicated problem was made not without difficulty, these final conclusions were not arrived at without painstaking study and extreme labor. It proved to be a new world for exploration: alienism, that distant and terrifying province of scientific psychology. Happily the means for exploration were at hand, and they served well for one interested, but untrained in scientific research. For this reason it proved pleasant, although it required long months that had to be devoted to this study. We did not hesitate. By reason of the permission granted to us by M. Brouardel, we were allowed to consult, according to our needs, such specialists as Ribot and Janet of the College of France, and Dr. Klippel of the Paris Hospital. To them we return thanks for the information they imparted, and for their considerate advice.

While Lauvrière deserves credit for the effort he made, and for his good intentions, the result hardly justified this preparatory course of study.

> A little learning is a dangerous thing;
> Drink deep, or taste not the *Pierian* spring.

Lauvrière was a "Docteur ès Lettres," not a Doctor of Medicine. In attempting to discuss a subject by its very nature difficult and not fully comprehended by our most advanced students, and one concerning which so many diverse and radically opposed theories are advanced, he undertook something for which he was not prepared.

I do not wish to be understood as intimating that to become a competent alienist one must be either a graduate in medicine or a psychiatrist. On the other hand, the reading of a few books, conversations with specialists, or association with those qualified to speak with authority, cannot, in the course of a few months, prepare the most eager investigator authoritatively to discuss a subject which, after years of practical familiarity and constant association, its students are forced to admit has no anatomical foundation, and permits only of the most general theorizing.

Neither the anatomy of the brain nor the physiological changes that it undergoes when it functions normally, have been definitely established. Frequently it happens that some new stain upsets preconceived ideas of cell arrangement, their association tracts and fibrillary connection. Although anatomists believe they are making advances in special knowledge of this subject, no organ of the human body is less understood by the physiologist than the brain. Unlike other departments of medicine, there is no definitely accepted pathology of insanity, nor even a classification followed by all who discuss mental diseases. We still confuse first symptoms with causation; nor have we

the slightest conception of what physiological changes underlie normal ideation. Much less do we understand those changes in the cells of the brain that are responsible for abnormal psychology. We cannot solve the riddle of heredity, even though the researches of Mendel and others who amplified his observations have laid an excellent foundation as far as body-characteristics are concerned. Who has laid down, or can lay down, rules for guidance in the reproduction of those qualities of head and heart so necessary to the well-being of the race? We talk much of eugenic laws, and various organizations learnedly discuss ways and means of human improvment. We can breed for size, or for other physical qualities; but we are *more* than animals. Brain is not synonymous with brawn. We must not measure the stature of Napoleon or that of Lloyd George by the yardstick. In that famous debate between those well-known Georgia Senators, Toombs and Stephens, when gigantic Toombs boasted that, if they would only grease Stephens' head and tie back his ears, he "could swallow him whole," and little Stephens replied (borrowing from Scott) that "if he did, Toombs would have more brains in his belly than he had in his head," we have a memorable truth. How can we infuse into the texture of the brain those qualities that make for nobility of character and greatness of soul? that produced a Washington, and that typifies a Wilson? What psychologist could have arranged the mating that produced the lovable qualities of a Goldsmith, or the dominating personality of a Johnson? Who could have foretold the result of the paternal accidents in the life histories of Dickens, Lincoln, and Mark Twain? And what soothsayer could so have read the auspices as to have foretold the result of the mating of a strolling actress (unknown, and who, possibly like Topsy, "just growed") with the drunken, the degenerate, and the shiftless son of a family "whose greatest enemy had

always been the bottle"? The qualities of the mind, as well as their morbid reactions, are too delicate ever to be understood or scientifically prearranged. For the world this is fortunate, however high an inheritance tax the victims of heredity must pay. Eradicate the nervous diathesis, suppress the hot blood that results from the overclose mating of neurotics, or from that unstable nervous organization due to alcoholic inheritance, or even from insanity and the various forms of parental degeneracy, and we would have a race of stoics—men without imagination, individuals incapable of enthusiasms, brains without personality, souls without genius. It is possible to mate for bulk. By selecting desirable physical qualities we can produce a perfect human brute, but we have lost those higher and ennobling gifts that have made so much for the world's pleasure and progress. Who could, or would, breed for a hump-backed Pope, or a clubfooted Byron, a scrofulous Keats, or a soul-obsessed Poe? Nature has done fairly well by us. Love, which mates opposites, which induces the weak to cling to the strong, the bold and reckless to seek the timid and retiring, the bulky frame to search out its opposite in the small and compact stature, provides a method of selection more in accord with natural laws than any eugenic statutes we could enact. The tuberculous and the neurotic have their place in Nature's scheme. Suppress them, and we have extinguished the flower before it has fruited. While nature often throws these aside in the first generation, always in the second or third unless complementary mates are chosen, the genius in them has given to the world much that the world ill could spare.

Into this mesh of theories, and into this quagmire of ignorance of Nature's laws, Lauvrière has entered boldly with his newly acquired knowledge. He attempts not only to solve the riddle of the mind, but confidently passes on questions of heredity. His study of genius is particularly

enlightening, and the result he reaches measures the scientific value of his deductions. Using the translation of Professor Morris: "In short, everywhere in this temple of madness, we witness, enthralled by the charm of a dangerous art, the fascinating but exhausting spectacle of the human faculties, sensibility, energy, intelligence, imagination, reason, taste, outraged in paroxysms of pain. If the frightful superiority of this extraordinary being comes from genius, then genius is nothing but frenzied excesses."

To Lauvrière, Poe presents a type of genius in its most repulsive form. He traces Poe's career from infancy, stupefied by gin and surrounded by the squalor and poverty-begotten environments that were the lot of the dying mother, through unhappy boyhood with proud spirit chafing against restraint, into young manhood undisciplined by moral laws; and he shows Poe's matured habits characterized by unceasing dissipation that weakened and finally overthrew a brain by inheritance abnormal.

Poe, from birth, was a degenerate. He was born under miserable hygienic conditions and inherited from his parents both an alcoholic neurosis and a phthisical constitution. With such an heredity this abnormal Richmond child presented a precocious intelligence and an exalted sentimentality, with a quick but intermittent energy on which was laid the foundation of his indisciplinable character. With a mind inflated by pride he passed an unstable youth immersed in a series of ecstatic, morbid trances, and mystic visions commingled with expansive ideas. Following closely upon such dreams came a series of rash and unconsidered adventures until defeats, responsibilities, and misery made of the rich, adopted, city child, of the proud poet, the brilliant idealist and dreamer a deserter, a wandering vagabond without hearth or home, an outcast, a madman. [un bohème sans feu ni lieu, un déclassé un detraqué.]

Is he to be regarded as a man insane or as a genius, this strange, unbalanced and impossible personality; a man whose brain wanders on the border line between crime and genius? It is doubtless true that toward the end of his life and of his sad career, this poor decadent

was a partially reasoning madman whose double, circular insanity was allowed to grow greater and greater, and there came recurring periods of depression complicated by outbreaks of erotomania.

In this estimate, evidently based on Poe's own words, which Lauvrière has little more than paraphrased, and which we find in the opening description of *William Wilson*, it is evidently assumed that Poe was giving an accurate autobiographic statement—a thing impossible to conceive except by one who assumes that everything Poe wrote was only his reflected self, and that he could give forth no other sentiments except those he individually felt:

I am come of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament had at all times rendered them remarkable; and, in my earliest infancy, I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character. As I advanced in years it was most strongly developed; becoming, for many reasons, a cause of serious disquietude to my friends and of positive injury to myself. I grew self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions. Weakminded, and beset with constitutional infirmities akin to my own, my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me.

Poe, in writing *William Wilson*, did exhibit consummate psychological acumen. It is a story dreadful in its keen psycho-analysis, but it was not necessarily a personal experience, though he wrote in the first person.

Lauvrière bases not only the conception, but even the ideation of much that Poe wrote upon his abnormal psychology while under the influence of drugs and stimulants:

We believe that the truth is most difficult to arrive at for the reason that spiritual superiority is the infinitely variable product of mental faculties, more or less abnormal. . . . There is no human faculty the morbid development of which may not end either in genius or insanity, and, at times, it is difficult to draw the line of demarcation separating them. Not to mention the alternating states of exaltation and depression, equally characteristic of this state of nervous tension, it frequently happens that the artistic vision changes into an ocular hallucination; the inspiration of the poet into delirious

ramblings; the contemplations of the philosopher into ecstatic visions; the unbending logic of the scientist into the reasoning paranoia; the imperious energy of the man of action into a criminal impulsion: and how often, and in how many celebrated cases, has not this fated change come with some tragic denouément that has startled the world? Between these two orbits of mental revolution, great as these extremes may be, there exists, for the genius, a large neutral zone where these differences, in the degree of the nervous and mental manifestations, make their psychological relationship of less importance than are the practical consequences that may result. In the midst of this questionable zone floats the morbid genius of Poe. It was endowed with this distinctive precocity, and with the fatal predetermined course characteristic of innate tendencies. It possesses for an unstable basis morbid sensibility as greedy of, as it is susceptible to, intense emotional states. From birth to death it balances between conditions of ecstasy and melancholy, and this was the origin both of Poe's poetic inspirations and of his fantastic creations; of his literary dogmas and of his synthetical metaphysical creations. Because of these alternating conditions both in his prose and verse, come those passages of unutterable despair, as well as those vibrating with the exhilaration of life. From this comes that glowing mystic cult which unites beauty with death but ends by confounding them. From this influence come seraphic lovers filled with platonic dreams rather than inspired by passion. From this arises those macaber apparitions exaggerated because of the emanations of alcohol and opium. From this, also, comes those tremulous excesses of a degenerate character, a prey to the most contradictory forces. On this doubly unstable foundation his poetry, from its first childish prattle till its last senile ramblings, always sings its sad melodies that, rising from unconscious depths, survive reason. In his criticisms there is a mixture of bitter intolerance and of proud, suspicious egotism. His stories abound with hallucinatory visions of fear, and of obsessions that lead to criminal acts and, occasionally, are characterized by adventurous flights of intuition and marvelous 'chimeres de l'imagination.' Even in his most grotesque mood, grinning behind his mask, his macaber visions and deep sadness lie hidden; and, in his excited discussions of the most abstruse problems, he erects on a frail and emotional basis the most fantastic structures of occult pantheism.

The clarity of Poe's reasoning, and his powers of analysis as displayed by his solution of cryptograms, as well as

in many of his tales, disprove this generalization of Lauvrière. He has strangely ignored the keenness of the mental processes that Poe must have employed in writing such stories as *The Gold Bug* and the *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, and the imaginative qualities displayed in *The Domain of Arnheim*. Nor has he properly understood and differentiated the varying mental states Poe delineated in *The Black Cat* and *The Tell Tale Heart*. To use any of these stories, or that masterly description of an overwrought nervous depressive state, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (which in a certain way might have been autobiographic) as proof, or even as an illustration of a mental condition brought on by the overuse of alcohol and opium, is a psychological crime. It can only be explained by Lauvrière's exaggerated belief in the value of the special studies he made. Our investigations into the effect of even small quantities of alcohol in retarding mental concepts, must have been well within his knowledge. That the brain could have so functioned as to produce results that required the highest idealizations and the strongest logical faculties, is the best evidence that it was not dulled by alcoholic poisoning.

This thrice-repeated dancing skeleton of Macaber, which Lauvrière so insistently dangles before us, may have been Germanic in its conception, but it is essentially French in its later development, and in this peculiar method of application.

While it is true that, upon occasion, Poe drank to excess, and that, in time, these frequently repeated, alcoholically poisoned drenchings did set up organic changes in the brain cells and their coverings, these circumstances added no brilliancy to Poe's mental faculties; on the contrary, they slowly and insidiously unfitted him for his best work. Although there were repeated acute mental disturbances they were of short duration. At no time, could Poe have

been classified as a "madman," or was he a "monster." The vigor of Lauvrière's epithets carries him beyond a scientific pronouncement. Within certain limits, psychiatrists are agreed on fundamental propositions, and accept as an established fact the close relationship of diseases originating in the nervous diathesis; further than this they are by no means in accord. We recognize groups of symptoms, or "syndromes," as characterizing certain nervous states, but, at best, we do not more than generalize in our attempts to classify them. Beyond this, at times we seriously differ when specific claims are made as to definite causation, or as to the *modus operandi* of brain functioning. There are as many theories as there are text-books.

> Much less this dreamer, deaf and blind,
> Named man, may hope some truth to find,
> That bears relation to the mind.
> For every worm beneath the moon
> Draws different threads, and late and soon
> Spins, toiling out his own cocoon.

Lauvrière's error consists in his attempt concretely to apply these generalizations and his excess of faith in the soundness of the theories he has absorbed. He accepts as true all that has been alleged, and admits all into his discussion as a basis for further generalization. In this way, he has erected a structure both "arabesque and grotesque" in which he has attempted to domicile Poe.

His final estimate measures the psychological acumen of the man.

> Beneath this web of contradictory statements, the character of Poe seems to be an enigma: an unreal and an unbelievable personality. Some describe him as a man false, cruel, cynical; more devil than human, whose odious actions seem to arise from a monstrous perversion. Others describe him as a peaceful friend, generous, invariably kind, cheerful and courteous: a model in all that concerns social and domestic virtues; and that, in addition to this, he was the soul of honor. Which of these opinions shall we accept? Whom of his biographers

are we to believe? In our opinion, both. It is not wise to adopt the middle course and thus to efface an individuality which nature has so markedly accentuated. Whether or not we like it we must accept this double personality as a fact, and not as an exaggeration; and, further, that they alternated the one with the other. Is it not a matter of common knowledge that the dipsomaniac, whether drinking or abstinent, resembles a man with two personalities inhabiting the same body? one steady, sober, laborious, even austere; the other only half conscious, almost insane, a prey to all follies, to all excesses? This double personality has been compared to a lighthouse that has two differently colored lights and, according to the disk through which the light shines, the rays appear red or blue. For this reason this remarkable man, who, to his tavern companions appeared to be little else than a degraded drunken sot, lacking human reason and moral sense, was, in the eyes of his friends and admirers, a poor misunderstood genius who was calumniated, and, for that reason, so much the more worthy of admiration and sympathy. These two views cannot possibly be reconciled, and we must accept both as equally true: two aspects of this Janus with the double face.

There is, however, a seriously complicating factor. As we have before remarked, dipsomania is nothing but an inherited form of insanity, and it may present itself under many aspects. In many cases, besides the more or less constant oscillation between melancholic depression and maniacal exaltation, there are a number of eccentric deviations which cross one another because of acquired or inherited degeneration. One should, for this reason, not speak of duality in the presence of this mental incoherence, but rather of the plurality of the ego, the breaking up of human personality, and the return of the individual *ego* to initial chaos [Effritement de la personnalité humaine, retour de la colonie individuelle au chaos initial.] 'An essential and striking clinical fact,' says Dr. Magnan, 'is the coexistence in the same individual patient of more or less marked obsessions, occasionally present at the same time, more frequently separated and exhibiting themselves at various periods of life. This peculiarity is especially to be noted and is illuminating because it makes clear and fully explains the nature of these morbid manifestations. When one thoroughly investigates the lives of these patients it is only exceptionally that only one syndrome is found. It is not rare to find several coinciding syndromes. Generally there is no law governing this association, and their only point of relationship is in their origin. The more one observes the more frequently one finds

examples of this multiplication. If all of these syndromes, thus co-existing, succeed and multiply themselves infinitely, it can only be because of the basic fact of their having originated from the same morbid condition, and that they are the result of cerebrospinal automatism. 'Thus through the destructive agency of suffering and unhappiness, of overwork and excesses of all kinds, this poor personality of Poe, so sensitively and so impulsively organized and so badly co-ordinated, began by degrees to show evidence of disorganization. It was for this reason that he began to show evidences of mental disturbance complicated by such impulses which, originally, he had under control, but which now destroyed the general harmony. Slowly there developed evidences of decay in his fragile and unstable individuality. From the fact of this loss of mental control comes the heartbreaking spectacle of a mind based originally on a groundwork of morbid sensibility, with time growing more diseased, with constantly increasing symptoms characterized by obsessions, impulsions, and morbid fears; ideas of persecution and delusions of grandeur—all symptoms of a hopeless insanity.

By neither absorption nor experience did Lauvrière understand more than the most general rudiments of a subject that no one fully comprehends. In attempting to apply these to Poe's particular psychology he accepted as definitely established truths the most generally applied theories. It was not altogether because of his dependence on Griswold for the facts of Poe's life that he wrote, "*Sa vie et son oeuvre apparaissment commes des monstruosities vides de sens.*" Surely Poe's own work was open to him: had he not been blinded by scientific aphorisms, basically true but misapplied, he could not have drawn the conclusions he did.

Lauvrière's special study of dipsomania is based on extracts and statements equally distorted. In copying from Magnan, and in elaborating on that excerpt as applicable to Poe, Lauvrière is in serious error. While it is a matter of every-day experience, authoritatively established by scientific knowledge, that a man suddenly may be seized by an obsession that compels him to seek oblivion in some

form of narcosis, alcoholic or drugged, and that, during this time, he may sin grievously against the moral laws, this fact does not make him either a madman or, necessarily, a degenerate; although it is established with equal definiteness that such attacks, frequently indulged in and unduly prolonged, may induce organic changes in the tissues that compose the cerebrum, and cause brain weakness resulting in acute mental disturbance.

Lauvrière, rightly diagnosing Poe's inherited disease to have been dipsomania, has made a special study of this mental state:

'Dipsomania is one of the evils following in the train of hereditary insanity, heredity always dominating as a predisposing factor in its causation: all such patients are predisposed to insanity by reason of their ancestry, insofar as we have seen, or can determine. Should one search into their early history it is found that, even in childhood, they have shown peculiarities of character and abnormalities of mind which distinguish them from other children of the same age, though raised under the same social conditions. One of these characteristics is a pronounced precocity.

Such individuals are solitary, live apart, concentrate on special subjects, and, as a rule, are unbalanced, with a predisposition to melancholy. They are especially attracted by whatever is fantastic. With few exceptions they belong to that class of degenerates known as reasoning idiots.'

Must we not, in reading these lines, admit that, in addition to these leading characteristics, the unfortunate Poe possessed all these secondary traits which so indelibly and cruelly marked the physiognomy of this hereditary madman, doomed not only to abnormal mental peculiarities but especially to dipsomaniacal fury.

Lauvrière has taken a very broad generalization of Magnan's, which possibly was intended as a reference to "psychoneuroses," and has used it as proof that "*la Dipsomanie n'est qu'un symptôme de la folie héréditaire.* The explanation given of the duality of Poe's personality, technically correct, assumed as true statements concerning

the facts of Poe's life that had no existence except in Griswold's untrue assertions. In his scientific enthusiasm, Lauvrière fails to take into account some things that are a matter of common knowledge. Possibly a study of the context accompanying the excerpt from Magnan would show that Lauvrière's interpretation is misleading. It certainly is not a fact that syndromes typifying definite neuroses are interchangeable; nor do several of these manifest themselves in the same individual either at the same time or at different periods of his life history. One who inherits sick headache does not have epilepsy as a complicating factor, however closely related be their origin. Neurasthenia remains neurasthenia and by no means, directly or indirectly, does it necessarily change into other neuroses. Dipsomania is not a term synonymous with insanity; neither by heredity nor directly does it bear a closer relation to mental diseases than do the other neuroses. Should a mental disturbance develop because of changed cerebral circulation, this is directly due to an organic change produced because of meningeal involvement, whereas insanity is essentially a functional disturbance, without an organic basis, and having no discoverable pathological changes as a foundation. Dipsomania has, as a predisposing factor, not insanity, but a direct alcoholic inheritance. To call dipsomaniacs insane, or to class them among the mentally unsound, is not justified by our experience, even though, theoretically, they belong to the same group and, at times, do show traces of nervous instability with occasional irrational acts. Had this unsoundness taken the form of megrim, no such reprehensible term would have been applied.

To further make plain Poe's condition, Lauvrière quotes Barine:

> Recently, Arvède Barine, in three brilliant articles overflowing with generous enthusiasm, believed he had found in dipsomania,

alone, the key to this enigma. But this dipsomania of Poe, as we have stated, can not be regarded as a form of drunkenness; rather it is absolutely the result of alcoholic degeneration and is in fact a general disease of the mind. . . . It is in vain that the frightened victim [of dipsomania] repeatedly attempts to regain self control, and takes oaths of reformation in attempting to strengthen his will-power over this alcoholic compulsion—an enemy that has now become a part of his flesh.

In spite of all his efforts the vice persists and, unobtrusively, it accomplishes its task by slowly undermining his bodily functions; with an unstrung nervous system he becomes progressively weakened physically, and there only remains moral insensibility to the finer things of life, while all that is left is mental anarchy. There is a feverish activity which ends in hopeless impotence, and, in place of ambitions realized, only heart-breaking disappointments. It ends in hopeless weakness. There comes fierce criticisms or exalted praise; monomania of persecution, or the brilliant sparkling of a supreme genius; sensational mystification, or a tenacious pursuit of gigantic projects.

Although, occasionally, it happens that dipsomaniacs give evidence of a disturbed mentality, by no possible theory can they be called *madmen*. I have many friends—lawyers, physicians, occasionally clergymen, and men prominent in social and business life—who, possessing exceptional mental endowments, are the victims of this inheritance. Frequently they succeed in fighting off their periodical seizures; yet, when the obsession does overwhelm them they will disappear for a few days or for weeks. What happens during this period does not concern the world—as a rule. Whether they are able to remain in control of their distraught nerves, or whether they are swept away by the impetuosity of uncontrollable compulsions, they are equally sufferers from an hereditary neurosis. By no method of reasoning can this be considered tantamount to insanity; nor justly can they be called insane, although at times they may appear irrational, or be irresponsible.

Lauvrière's inclusion of dipsomania, insanity, moral abnormalities, and genius in the same class can not be

supported by any alienistic theory with which I am familiar, however closely they may be related basically; nor the further fact that they occasionally are associated in the same patient because of some intercurrent, temporary circumstance. His inclusion of men of genius is in line with the theory of certain sensational writers whose ideas have never been accepted by alienists. In no circumstances can their mental state come under the usually accepted definition of insanity: "A condition of intellectual disturbance characterized by delusions out of which the patients cannot be reasoned."

Yet Lauvrière furnishes a long list of names of those whom he includes in his classification, especially many English writers. Among these are Swift, Johnson, Blake, Burton, Rochester and others, and he adduces evidence of their mental unsoundness. That he excludes much of French literature from the taint of such origin is noteworthy:

> If French literature present less abnormal talent and genius, it is probably because the French spirit is more moderate and has been, for a long period, under the moral discipline of the XVII century.

Evidently a nation cannot judge of its susceptibility to such a charge more discriminatingly than can an individual. My own conception of French psychology preceding and during the times of Louis XIV is somewhat different.

It is true that many names mentioned by Lauvrière have legends associated with them that would indicate peculiarities of character which differentiate them from the standards we have adopted and by which we judge the average man. Abnormal development of one particular faculty is regarded as a "gift"; yet it presupposes a corresponding deficiency in some other mental quality. There is no such thing as a "universal genius." The brilliant orator, the musical genius, and the gifted painter are not, as a rule, characterized by "common sense"; and frequently they show a deficiency of mental poise because they lack

some prosaic quality with which the average individual is endowed. An unbiased and unsympathetic investigation into the life history of most of our great men, whether of letters, science, or the arts, would exhibit many personal peculiarities, if not mental abnormalities. While, possibly, the "strict moral discipline of the XVII century" may have diminished this tendency among the French, Lauvrière finds it even there. Nor does he fail to cite the authority of antiquity as proof of "the insanity of genius":

> This question is as old as the world. The ancients saw no difference between the revelations of the wise-men and the ravings of the mad-men. For this reason they believed that the delusions induced by the gods were more trustworthy than were the deductions which were the result of human thought. . . . There is a third delirium, known as inspiration which, entirely enthusing a pure soul, animates and transports it. *Nullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiae* was an adage evidencing the wisdom of the ancients.

Lauvrière gives this judgment of Poe and his writings:

> The important question of the relationship of genius to insanity comes so definitely in the case of Poe, that Poe himself has asked it. For this reason we cannot avoid it: let us treat it frankly, not with the expectation of an impossible solution but in the hope of casting on it the light of our own investigations and that of many others.
>
> The whole monstrous work trembles beneath a wind of madness, and is only held together by some harmonious law of logic and by the secret virtue of marvelous artifice. But so great is his art, which triumphs over madness, that, from the coldest of judges, comes the verdict: 'No, this extraordinary man who, in a few works, has given to humanity some of its rarest thrills and supremest emotions, was indeed mad; or if the word genius really means originality, there was in his madness an inseparable as well as an undeniable mixture of genius.'

This is an outrage on the memory of Poe comparable only to the verbal assault of Griswold. That it is the result of ignorance and not of malevolence may abate its moral turpitude but it does not excuse the act. It is due the good name of Poe that this stigma on his memory be removed, provided a fair investigation of the facts of Poe's

life show that it is undeserved. It is certain that Lauvrière's psychological studies do not justify him in finding this verdict.

That this work of Lauvrière must possess merit as literature, irrespective of its scientific or critical value, is evident by the great reputation this study has achieved in France, and the tribute paid it when it was crowned by the French Academy. Whether or not it has been equally honored by French alienists, I do not know.

If the crown with which this work has been distinguished was bestowed for its literary merits, probably the award was just; if for its value as a contribution to the scientific study of Poe's psychology, I dissent. Further, as an alienist I claim that the jewels adorning this crown are either of synthetic manufacture or they are composed of paste.

Immediately upon Poe's death, Griswold announced that he had been selected by Poe to be his literary executor. He sought Mrs. Clemm, obtained access to all of Poe's manuscripts, letters, books and papers of every description, and undertook the task of collecting and editing all that Poe had written and published. From these papers Griswold selected those he believed worth preserving. Estimated by the new material published, either this collection of Poe remainders was small, or, in the judgment of this literary editor, it was without value. In this republication certain reviews were suppressed, and others were modified either by Poe before his death or by his editor, Griswold. These manuscripts were never returned.

By what means Griswold succeeded in gaining possession of "*all*" Poe's papers, and for what reason he wished to edit them and to preserve them when past differences were so notorious, deserves a much fuller discussion than this question has received.

Woodberry barely refers to the matter, simply stating:

> Before leaving Fordham he [Poe] wrote requests that Griswold should superintend the collection of his works, and that Willis should write such a biographical notice as should be deemed necessary.

If Poe wrote such a note, Griswold did not receive it. Griswold's own statement is explicit and definite:

> I would gladly have declined a trust imposing so much labor, for I had been compelled by ill health to solicit the indulgence of my publishers, who had many thousand dollars in an unfinished work under my direction; but when I was told by several of his intimate friends —among others by the family of S. D. Lewis, Esq.,—that he had long been in the habit of expressing a desire that in the event of his death I should be his editor, I yielded to the apparent necessity.

Griswold never stated that he had been directly asked to officiate in this capacity, nor that he had received such request by letter. Had he been directly approached he would not apologetically have published a number of irrelevant business letters, not always dated, which he prefixed to his memoir in order to prove that he was on friendly terms with Poe.

For some reason Griswold took and retained Poe's private papers and MSS. Gill, basing his statement on letters and direct communications personally made to him by Mrs. Clemm, says:

> It was simply the act of a designing and unscrupulous man, prompted by hatred and greed of gain, taking advantage of a helpless woman, unaccustomed to business, to defraud her of her rights, and gratify his malice and his avarice at her expense. A small sum of money having been given to Mrs. Clemm in exchange for Poe's private papers, Dr. Griswold draws up a paper for Mrs. Clemm to sign, announcing his appointment as Poe's literary executor. This is duly signed by Mrs. Clemm and printed over her signature in the published edition of Poe's works. . . . Mrs. Clemm, at the time she signed the paper which she scarcely understood, had no idea that Dr. Griswold had any intention of supplementing Mr. Willis' obituary with any memoir by his own pen.

This refers to a preface, "To The Reader," signed by Mrs. Clemm, that had been inserted into the first volume, "Tales." In addition, this contained a short biography entitled "Edgar A. Poe," written by James Russell Lowell. This had been published in "Graham's Magazine" in 1845, and was here republished with slight variations. With this was a most appreciative review of Poe and his work by Willis, under the title "Death of Edgar A. Poe."

> In this edition of my son's works, published for my benefit, it is a great pleasure for me to thank Mr. Griswold and Mr. Willis . . . for labors . . . which they performed without any other recompense than the happiness which rewards acts of duty and kindness.

Neilson Poe transmitted to Griswold all the books and MSS. that he found in the trunk that Edgar Poe had with him at the time of his death, and these, together with the things taken from Mrs. Clemm, must have constituted Poe's library as well as his entire literary remains. Following Poe's death, Neilson Poe wrote Griswold:

> I have opened his trunk and find it to contain very few manuscripts of value. The chief of them is a lecture on the poetic principle and some paragraphs prepared, apparently, for some literary journal. There are, however, a number of books, his own works, which are full of corrections in his own hand. These ought, undoubtedly, to be placed in your hands.

Woodberry in commenting on this letter describes certain of these books:

> These volumes were the copies of the *Tales* and *Poems*, now known as the Lorimer-Graham copies, the copy of *Eureka*, now known as Hurst's copy, and possibly others, all afterwards sold with Griswold's library.

Not one of Poe's books or MSS. was returned by Griswold to Mrs. Clemm. These he had especially demanded as a preparation for their proper publication, and they included not only all of the books, many of them specially annotated by Poe, but all his notes and private memoranda. It has

been asserted that Poe, at the time of his death, had completed a book which was to be entitled "The Authors of America," and its publication was announced in the "Home Journal" as of immediate issuance. It has never appeared. It is possible that it contained criticisms which Griswold believed were not creditable to Poe: yet it is not fair to Griswold to make so direct a charge of double dealing, for no one positively knows what was contained in the papers and books that Mrs. Clemm gave in to Griswold's possession by special request. It is also known that Poe had collected material for a "Critical History of American Literature"; at least he so wrote Lowell. Nothing issued therefrom except a fragment called *The Lighthouse*. Had not *Annabel Lee* been in other hands, and *The Bells* already in type, one cannot but fear for their fate at the critical hands of Griswold.

Although ill and under contract to other publishers, Griswold worked with feverish energy gathering together and preparing for publication all of Poe's tales and poetry and a few of his reviews. These were published by Redfield early in 1850. Griswold at least succeeded in doing that in which Poe had so signally failed. Although Poe had sought many publishers, only occasionally had he found one who was willing to print his work. Even on those few occasions, he had not been allowed the privilege of editing. Woodberry states:

> He [Griswold] finally persuaded Mr. Redfield to try the experiment of issuing two volumes first, which were published and had a fair sale—then the third and finally the fourth were added to complete the works. The sale reached about 1500 sets each year.

That Griswold was industrious as well as successful is certain, for although arrangements financial and otherwise were not completed with Mrs. Clemm until late in November, 1849, it is to be noted that the first volume containing the "Tales," as well as the second volume, "Poetry and Miscellanies," was copyrighted in 1849.

Whether Redfield drove a hard bargain, or whether others participated in the profits that must have accrued, is not known; but it is known that over twenty thousand sets of these two volumes, with the succeeding two, were sold, an enormous circulation for those days. Neither the estate of Poe nor Mrs. Clemm, directly or indirectly, received any of the profits.

Who did receive the money earned by this publication?

Mrs. Clemm was definitely promised not only that she should participate in the profits of the sale of Poe's works, but was made to believe that these would amount to a sum so large as to make her independent of charity. Apparently she thought that Willis was to be associated with Griswold in this editorship. She wrote to "Annie":

> They say I am to have the *entire* proceeds so you see, Annie, I will not be entirely destitute. . . . [I] have been very much engaged with Mr. Griswold in looking over his [Poe's] papers. . . . He must have them *all* until the work is published. He thinks I will realize from two to three thousand dollars from the sale of these books. . . . How nobly they [Griswold and Willis] have acted! all done gratis, and you know to literary people that is a great deal. . . . Those gentlemen who have so kindly undertaken the publication of his works say that I will have a very comfortable income from them.

That her only recompense was as sales agent is shown by the following letter she wrote to Washington Poe, dated 1851, two years after Poe's death:

> The publisher of my poor Eddie's works can only allow me as many copies of the work as I choose to dispose of amongst my friends; but a continued state of ill health and a delicacy of feeling prevents my availing myself of this privilege, except through the kindness of a few friends who have disposed of a few copies for me.

Mrs. Clemm lived an object of charity and she died in a pauper's home.

Already I have dwelled sufficiently upon Poe's literary enemies, and on the fact that others besides Griswold entertained the sentiments expressed in the Ludwig article; and it is not possible altogether to excuse Poe from giving cause. In extenuation it can be said that a study of his morbid mental state shows that he was not at all times to be held responsible. While this must have been patent to all who associated with Poe, to those who did not know him, such an explanation was worthy of slight consideration.

On many occasions Poe was the aggressor: often to his credit, for to one who studies the literature of that day either as originally published in the many contemporary periodicals, or as selected and preserved in Duyckinck's "Cyclopedia of American Literature," much that Poe wrote, even if conceded to be severe, was undoubtedly true. In favorably criticising Wilmer's "Quacks of Helicon," Poe asserted:

> We repeat it: *it is* the truth which he has spoken; and who shall contradict us? He has said unscrupulously what every reasonable man among us has long known to be 'as true as the Pentateuch'—that, as a literary people, we are one vast perambulating humbug. He has asserted that we are *clique*-ridden; and who does not smile at the obvious truism of that assertion? He maintains that chicanery, with us, is a far surer road than talent to distinction in letters. Who gainsays this? The corrupt nature of our literary criticism has become notorious. The intercourse between critic and publisher, as it now universally stands, is comprised either in the paying and pocketing of blackmail, as the price of a simple forbearance, or in a petty and contemptible bribery, properly so called—a system even more injurious than the former to the true interests of the public, and more degrading to the buyers and sellers of good opinion, on account of the more positive service here rendered for the consideration received. We laugh at the denial of our assertions upon this topic: they are infamously true. In this charge of general corruption there are undoubtedly many noble exceptions to be made. . . . But these cases are insufficient to have much effect on the popular mistrust: a mistrust heightened by a late exposure of the machinations of coteries in New York—*coteries* which

at the bidding of leading booksellers, manufacture, as required from time, to time, a pseudo-public opinion.

Poe strongly intimated that Griswold had accepted money or, as he expressed it, a "*quid pro quo*" for admittance of certain writers into his collections, and that the amount of space assigned them depended on the sum of money they paid. Naturally, such statements intensified the personal dislike that from their first meeting had existed, into that deep-rooted hatred the evidence of which is so manifest in Griswold's memoir. Although Poe made these statements regarding Griswold publicly and in print long before his death, and on all occasions manifested his contempt, Griswold never openly resented it; on the other hand, after Poe's death Griswold exhibited solicitude for Mrs. Clemm and a desire to aid her in her bereavement. Otherwise he could not possibly have obtained permanent and complete control of all Poe's literary possessions, including even his books and private letters.

The underlying reason that impelled Griswold to volunteer as editor of Poe's works, and to assume their publication, cannot be positively stated. Whether he was moved to this by a spirit of forgiveness for a dead enemy, by compassion for the benighted and helpless mother, and an honest admiration for the material that required the services of a skillful compiler; or spurred to revenge injuries that he had never dared to resent while his foe lived, and a desire to protect his own good name from over-severe criticism, can never be known.

That Griswold believed he could in this way associate his name with one who would be regarded as our greatest writer is a possible but not a probable explanation, for he was myopic when long vision was necessary, and astigmatic when breadth of vision was required, and his estimates of "autorial" merit—if they were honest—were characterized by a pronounced strabismus.

Yet there *was* some compelling reason. As we can hardly read our own mind, much less that of another, the answer, at best, is a surmise and possibly would only approximate the truth, even if given by one unprejudiced. I can not qualify in this class, for which reason I doubt my own interpretation of the facts.

Whatever be the reason, the result, in Woodberry's opinion, reflects much credit on Griswold:

> The one distinguishing tribute paid to Rufus Wilmot Griswold, one that establishes his characteristic excellences, was his selection by Poe to be his literary executor just before his death. Poe was a good judge of editorial capacity, notwithstanding a history of personal relations that would seem to exclude the possibility of such a choice.

Having had experience with Poe's criticisms, Griswold was willing to "edit" at least one of these, and felt it wise to suppress or modify others. I cannot believe, with Gill, that the assumption of this editorship was "prompted by hatred," and that the insertion of the memoir in order to damn a dead enemy was a deciding factor; possibly, when Griswold saw the opportunity, he could not resist.

There was a reason which did deeply concern Griswold, and which might have induced him to purchase "*all*" manuscripts and thus obtain permanent control. Soon after "Poets and Poetry of America" was published Griswold and Poe discussed it, and Poe gave the following version of the conversation:

> I said that I had thought of reviewing it in full . . . and that I knew no other work in which a notice would be readily admissible. Griswold said in reply: 'You need not trouble yourself about the *publication* of the review, should you decide on writing it, for I will attend to all that. I will get it in some reputable work, and look to it for the usual pay in the meantime handing you whatever the charge would be.' This you see was an ingenious insinuation of a bribe to puff his book. I accepted his offer forthwith, and wrote the review, handed it to him, and received from him the compensation; he never daring to look over the manuscript in my presence, and taking it for granted it

was all right. But that review has not yet appeared, and I am doubtful if it ever will. I wrote it precisely as I would have written under ordinary circumstances, and be sure there was no predominance of praise.

One cannot be certain that this review, as written, was ever published. Apparently Poe did not make an extended criticism at that time, although there is an article reproduced in Poe's collected works under the title, *Mr. Griswold and the Poets*. While not altogether flattering, it does contain pleasant personal references, and occasionally there is a tone of decided approval.

In this preface, which is remarkably well written and strictly to the purpose, the author thus evinces a just comprehension of the nature and objects of true poesy, 'He who looks on Lake George, or sees the sun rise on the Mackinaw, or listens to the grand music of a storm, is divested, certainly for a time, of a portion of the alloy of his nature . . . *The creation of beauty, the manifestation of the real by the ideal, 'in words that move in metrical array'* is poetry. The italics are our own; and we quote the passage because it embodies the *sole true* definition of what has been a thousand times erroneously defined.

Neither this, nor other complimentary references, correspond with Poe's description of his review nor do they express Poe's real opinion of the work:

By the way, if you have not seen Mr. Griswold's 'American Series of the Curiosities of Literature' then look at it, for God's sake—or for mine. I wish you to say upon your word of honor, whether it is, or is not, *per se*, the greatest of all the curiosities of Literature, or whether it is as great a curiosity as the compiler himself.

Again Poe wrote:

He is a pretty fellow to set himself up for an *honest* judge, or even as a capable one. I shall make war to the knife against the New England assumption of 'All the decency and all the talent' which has been so disgustingly manifested by the Rev. Rufus Griswold's 'Poets and Poetry of America.'

Poe, in his lecture on "The Poets and Poetry of America," severely criticized Griswold's volume. However, the crowning offense was his review in the "Saturday Museum" of the third edition of Griswold's "Poets."

Poe began this review with a discussion of Griswold's capacity for such work. He questioned Griswold's pretension to having established either a literary or a critical reputation that would give him the right to pass on the qualifications and the literary performances of his contemporaries whom he proposed to discuss. He asks:

> Did the 'Jonathan' or the 'Notion' attain any higher position than before, during Mr. G.'s connection with them; or have the 'Post' or 'Graham's' improved under his supervision? The 'Standard' we leave out of the question as it expired under his management. Certainly not the former; and the brilliant career of 'Graham's Magazine' under Mr. Poe's care, and its subsequent trashy literary character since his retirement, is a sufficient response. . . . As a critic his judgment is worthless, for a critic should possess sufficient independence and honesty to mete out justice to all men, without fear, favor or partiality. . . . Are Dana and Hoffman the superiors of N. P. Willis? . . . Is Bryant a better poet than Longfellow? Certainly not, for in Longfellow's pages the spirit of poetry—ideality—walks abroad, while Bryant's sole merit is tolerable versification and fine marches of description. Longfellow is undoubtedly the best poet in America.

After discussing versification and the art of poetry, and after specifying certain necessary standards that must guide a poet in his selection and treatment of a subject, illustrating it with various happy selections, Poe took up and critically dissected Griswold's poem, *The Sunset Storm.* He severely criticized its underlying idea, its versification and its grammatical construction, comparing it, to its very great disadvantage, with the *Charmed Sleeper.*

> Did any one ever read such nonsense? We *never* did, and, shall hereafter eschew everything that bears the name of Rufus Wilmot Griswold, as strongly as the Moslemite the forbidden wine, or the Jew the 'unmentionable flesh.' . . . We shall quote some few passages from one of his latest reviews, and that on the author of the 'Charmed Sleeper'—Alfred Tennyson, whose genius and originality have excited the imitative faculties of the principal poets of America. 'His chief characteristics pertaining to style, *they* will not long attract

regard.' Here we have a gross grammatical error—*two* nominatives to *one* verb, 'characteristics' and 'they' to 'will.' 'He tricks out common thoughts in dresses so unique it is not always easy to identify them.' (Is this not originality? Yet in the next portion of the sentence we hear this sapient critic say) 'but we have not seen in his works proofs of an original mind.' (*O tempora! O mores!* This *Griswold* says of *Tennyson!*) Again, 'as a versifier, Holmes is equal to Tennyson, and with the same patient effort would in every way surpass him. We desire none of his companionship.' (Don't you hope you may get it?) 'Him who *stole* at first hand from Keats.' Well, if this is not the height of assurance we do not know what is, coming as it does from one of the most clumsy of literary thieves, and who in his wildest aspirations, never even dreamed of an original thought. A man who does not understand the first principles of versification, the author of the 'Sunset Storm,' and thus to speak of Tennyson, the author of the 'Sleeping Beauty' we have just quoted! We can only say to Mr. Griswold, 'Jove protect *us* from his reviewing and the public from what he deems exquisite. . .' Let us proceed. Ah! what have we here? '*The creation of beauty, the manifestation of the real by the ideal, in words that move in metrical array, is poetry!*' Now what is this but a direct amplification of our *poet* of the definition of poetry—'*the rhythmical creation of beauty*'—which appeared in Mr. Poe's critique on Professor Longfellow's ballads, from which *we* know, and *he* knows, he stole it.

Compare this with *Mr. Griswold and the Poets* as published in "The Literati," and with the quotation already given that refers to this definition (p. 166).

Well, we have looked over the book, and we find it just such a result as might be anticipated. The biographies are miserably written, and as to the criticisms on style, they certainly are not *critiques raisonnes*, and that simply because reasoning and thinking are entirely out of Mr. G.'s sphere. As to the different degrees of merit allotted to each author, we cannot help thinking it possible, but we will not say it, that *sub rosa* arrangements were made, and a proportionable quantity of fame allotted, in consideration of the *quid pro quo* received. Besides the whole work is not even a specimen of the 'Poets and Poetry of America'; and in giving it our unqualified condemnation, we only cite the opinion of all, even to the poets who have been so unfortunate as to figure in its pages.

So Poe continues, excoriating and vitriolic in his denun-

ciations. He finishes his review with the following remarkable passage:

> Had Mr. Griswold the genius of Shakespeare, the powers of a Milton, or the critical learning of a Macaulay, he could not stem the torrent of animadversion this book has raised; but must be overwhelmed by the tide of public disapprobation which has set in so strongly upon him; but as he has neither the one nor the other, what will be his fate? Forgotten, save only by those whom he has injured and insulted, he will sink into oblivion, without leaving a landmark to tell he once existed; or if he is spoken of hereafter he will be quoted as *the unfaithful servant who abused his trust.*

The italics are Poe's. Could words more prophetic have been written?

This denunciatory criticism, which bears evidence of sincerity with a full comprehension of Griswold's failure as a critic, makes it impossible to believe that Poe did request Griswold to become his literary executor.

Griswold based his claim to appointment on the authority of "the family of S. D. Lewis, Esq.," declaring that he had heard from them that such was Poe's request.

As Poe was leaving New York on his last journey, in bidding farewell to Mrs. Lewis at whose house he had spent the night, she reports that he said:

> You truly understand and appreciate me—I have a presentiment that I shall never see you again. I must leave today for Richmond. If I never return, write my life. You can and will do me justice.

Woodberry, who has shown remarkable industry in gathering up all that concerns this controversy, fails to mention the "Saturday Museum," criticism of Griswold's "Poets of America," which necessarily did accentuate Griswold's hostility to Poe. Woodberry, remarking on Griswold's selection by Poe, does express surprise, stating that there was "a history of personal relations that would seem to exclude the possibility of such a choice," yet he does not question the truth of Griswold's assertion.

Griswold in the preface to his "Memoir" denies enmity:

> Both these writers—John Neal following the author of the letter signed 'George R. Graham'—not only assume what I have shown to be false (that the remarks on Poe's character were written by me *as his executor*), but that there was a long, intense, and implacable enmity betwixt Poe and myself, which disqualified me for the office of his biographer. This scarcely needs an answer after the poet's dying request that I should be his editor; but the manner in which it has been urged, will, I trust, be a sufficient excuse for the following demonstration of its absurdity.

Griswold quotes various letters, all referring to Poe's literary work, which he had proposed to include in his "Poets and Poetry of America," but the dates do not show that these were written after the "Museum" article, and Gill says that they were "emended."

Woodberry says:

> Of these letters two originals only were among the Griswold Mss. and both varied materially from the printed text; but however garbled the letters, the relations of the two men are plain. . . . These business communications contain expressions of regard for Griswold's work and apologetic expressions for censure, which may or may not be garbled or interpolated.

Griswold made no attempt to conceal his real attitude both to the memory of Poe and to Mrs. Clemm. In a letter written to Mrs. Whitman soon after Poe's death, Griswold does not hesitate to express himself fully:

> I wrote, as you suppose, the notice of Poe in 'The Tribune', but very hastily. *I was not his friend, nor was he mine* [italics are Griswold's] as I remember to have told you. I undertook to edit his writings to oblige Mrs. Clemm. . . . I saw very little of Poe in his last years. . . . I cannot refrain from begging you to be very careful what you say or write to Mrs. Clemm, who is not your friend, nor anybody's friend, and who has no element of goodness or kindness in her nature, but whose heart and understanding are full of malice and wickedness.

It was "to oblige Mrs. Clemm" that Griswold undertook the editorship, when, by so doing, he had "to solicit the indulgence of my publishers, who had many thousand

dollars invested in an unfinished work under my direction." It is noticeable that Woodberry does not refer to the personal hostility existing at that time; neither does he more than mention the "Museum" article, nor does he publish the letter that Griswold wrote Mrs. Whitman, though all other recent biographers have quoted it.

It must have been some powerful reason that induced Griswold to neglect his own work "involving thousands of dollars," with whose safe keeping he was intrusted, and to undertake the work of editing the writings of an avowed enemy who had so bitterly excoriated him. It was not for gain and it was not for love; nor was it "an act of duty and kindness." It did result in Griswold's "editing" some of Poe's criticisms, even after they had been published; in the emending of others, and in the suppression of his lecture on the "Poets and Poetry of America," as well as in the omission of the article which had appeared in the "Saturday Museum" from which I have quoted.

After reading that closing sentence, I cannot believe Poe "had long been in the habit of expressing a desire in the event of his death that I should be his editor." To avoid being pilloried for future generations, a less vain and self-seeking author would have desired the control and ownership of such a publication.

It is noticeable that this review has never been published in full even by the later editors of Poe's collected works and I have been able to find it only in the Gill appendix.

Griswold's effort would have met with success had he been able, when so fair an opportunity presented itself, to refrain from besmirching the memory of one of whom he should have been more considerate; at least he might have been forgotten, and not have been placed in the position of one who, "if he is spoken of hereafter, will be quoted as *the unfaithful servant who abused his trust.*"

Beyond question, Poe's criticism warped the judgment of Griswold. He was a Reverend, and possibly that kind of a Christian who will receive an insult without openly resenting it, and will "turn the other cheek" when assaulted. A man who thus accepts an insult is to be feared more than one who bravely stands forth, and hits back with all the strength that is in him. A gentle answer never turned away honest wrath and righteous indignation. I am as fearful of such association as I was when, sleeping in a cave of the Lava Beds, I found that a rattlesnake was warming itself in my blankets.

Christian though Griswold was, and meek and lowly as he may have appeared, he was not reputed to have been forbearing or honest. Ingram states that he was discharged from Graham's for "dishonesty," and that Thackeray "detected him in deliberate lying."

Woodberry in his "Appendix" quotes Leland, an intimate friend and admirer of Griswold, who wrote of him:

> To the end of his life I was always with him a privileged character and could take, if I chose, the most extraordinary liberties, though he was one of the most irritable and vindictive men I ever met if he fancied he was in any way too familiarly treated.

Another probable reference to Griswold is found in the "Six-penny Magazine," quoted by Woodberry. It referred to an "excursion to Fordham to visit Poe."

> Some sixteen years ago, I went on a little excursion with two others—one a reviewer, since dead, and the other a person who wrote laudatory notices of books, and borrowed money or favours from their flattered authors afterwards. He was called unscrupulous by some, but he probably considered his method a delicate way of conferring favour upon an author or of doing him justice without the disagreeable conditions of bargain and sale. It is certain that he lived better and held his head higher than many who did more and better work.

Yet, in judging the man, we must understand the times. It was not a period characterized by literary honesty, and Poe's "*quid pro quo*," applied to Griswold, could have with

equal truth described the literary morals of many others. It is known that Greeley used Griswold for "unholy" purposes. "Get a right notice in the 'Ledger' if you can. But pay for it rather than not get a good one." Another wrote: "If you can get the accompanying notices published, one in the 'North American' and the other in the 'Evening Journal' without betraying it, do so. I shall cheerfully reciprocate the favor." Woodberry adds:

> Greeley's characterizations are the shrewdest in the volume [referring to the papers Woodberry had been employed to edit] often only hints, but effective, and to Griswold himself he sometimes uses a tell-tale frankness: 'Now write me a few racy, spicy—not personal, far less malignant' [evidently Greeley knew his capacity and recognized his ability] 'depicting society and life in Philadelphia.' . . . Again, 'The only principle I ever found you tenacious of is that of having your pay at least as fast as you can earn it.' There are several other *obiter dicta* from different persons with regard to Griswold, who certainly had unamiable traits and grave defects.

After all, it is possible that, in the beginning, Griswold was only the *good dog*, the spaniel that fetched and carried for Greeley. It is known that Greeley bore no love for Poe and that, because Poe borrowed a small sum of money and had not been able to return it, Greeley did not hesitate to brand him publicly. Poe bitterly protested:

> In the printed matter, I have underscored two passages. As regards the first:—it alone would have sufficed to assure me that *you* did not write this article. I owe you money—I have been ill, unfortunate, no doubt weak, and yet am not able to refund the money—but on this ground *you*, Mr. Greeley, could never have accused me of being habitually unscrupulous in the fulfillment of my pecuniary obligations. The charge is *horribly false*—I have a hundred times left myself destitute of bread, for myself and family, that I might discharge my debts. . . . The second passage embodies a falsehood—and *therefore you* did not write it. I did *not* 'throw away the quill.' I arose from a sick-bed (although scarcely able to stand or see) and wrote.

It was Greeley who, according to his own report, ordered Griswold to write the Ludwig article, and while he does

not specify the exact instructions that he gave, it is entirely possible, judging from his method of personal supervision as detailed by Woodberry, that he fully indicated the character of the obituary he desired for publication. It is certain that he did not instruct Griswold to write one "not personal—far less malignant":

> We learned by telegraph the fact of Poe's death at Baltimore, in the afternoon following its occurrence and soon after, meeting Dr. Griswold, and knowing his acquaintance with Poe, asked him to prepare some account of the deceased for the next morning's paper. He *immediately and hastily wrote in our presence* his two columns or more.

This article, it is not unfair to infer, may have been the joint production of Greeley and Griswold and for some of its passages they must be held jointly responsible. One cannot come to know the facts as they relate both to the genesis of this obituary and to its later elaboration into a memoir without having for its authors a feeling strongly akin to disgust. True or false the assertions made therein should not have been inserted into a memoir prefacing Poe's works,

> . . . and which we think with Sir Thomas Browne should never be recorded,—being 'verities whose truth we fear and heartily wish there was no truth therein . . . whose relations honest minds deprecate.'

Although Griswold named Mrs. Lewis as his authority to act as Poe's editor, and she has been exploited as one of the friends who gave Poe aid and comfort in his time of trouble, I strongly suspect that her interest was a *pose*. There is reason to believe that her friendship was due to Poe's literary standing, the favors she had received from him and the assistance that she expected in furthering her literary pretensions, rather than to any genuine feeling.

There are certain letters on record that lead me to this conclusion. The first was written by Poe to Griswold and

is a plea for a more lenient, or a more liberal, judgment of Mrs. Lewis, in his "Female Poets of America."

> Since I have more critically examined your 'Female Poets,' it occurs to me that you have not *quite* done justice to our common friend, Mrs. Lewis; and if you would oblige me so far as to substitute, for your no doubt hurried notice, a somewhat longer one prepared by myself, I would reciprocate the favor when, where, and *as* you please.

The italicised *as* makes it evident that Poe was prepared to pay in whatever coin Griswold might demand. Poe had no money, but he did have a remarkably vigorous pen. Those were queer times and we cannot always believe everything we read: in the case of Poe the remarkable thing was that sooner or later his critical judgment asserted itself, and he made plain his genuine estimate. Both Poe and Griswold were worth cultivating by any lady with literary aspirations.

It is on record that Poe wrote Thomas:

> You would oblige me very especially if you would squeeze in what follows, editorially. The lady (Mrs. Lewis) spoken of, is a most particular friend of mine, and deserves *all* I have said of her. I will reciprocate the favor I ask, whenever you say the word and show me how.

It has been said that it was of this lady's poems that Poe, when asked to review them, "simply remarked that if he reviewed her rubbish it would kill him."

This, like many other alleged side-remarks attributed to Poe, is apocryphal. Harrison quotes Poe as writing:

> Mrs. Lewis is, perhaps, the best educated, if not the most accomplished of American authoresses. . . . She is not only cultivated as respects the usual ornaments of her sex, but excels as a modern linguist, and very especially as a classical scholar; while her scientific acquisitions are of no common order.

After Poe's death and the appearance of the Ludwig article with the "Memoir" containing a letter Poe had written to Griswold in which this lady's name was men-

tioned—not a *nice* thing for Griswold to have done—Mrs. Lewis wrote Griswold:

> Nothing has ever given me so much insight into Mr. Poe's real character as his letters to you, which are published in this third volume. They will not fail to convince the public of the injustice of Graham and Neal's articles. I was astonished at the part of P.'s Note, where he says—'*But I have promised Mrs. L. this.*' I will explain. Mrs. C[lemm] said to me on one of her visits, 'Dr. G[riswold] has been at Fordham. He came to see Eddie about you. Something about the new edition of "The Female Poets." But you are not to know anything about it.' Mr. P. never mentioned the subject to me, or I to him. He only sent to me for my latest poems, saying that you were going to increase or rewrite the Sketch for a new edition of 'The Female Poets.'

Such a return for *such* a kindly meant act of Poe by *such* a woman! It is to be hoped that she so placated Griswold that he did amplify her "Sketch," even though she comes down to us not because she appeared among the "Female Poets" but because she has been included among Poe's friends and has been alluded to as his benefactress. This letter has not been commented on by any of Poe's biographers, although Woodbury refers to it in his "Notes".

Even though there were many of Poe's old friends and former associates loyal to his memory who on numerous occasions rallied to his defense, their kind recollections and assertions of his good qualities availed little. Their voices were drowned by the vehemence of Griswold's denunciations. So forgotten are these statements, and so scattered are they in the pages of obsolete magazines, that I will partly quote a few of them.

In a letter to Willis, written after Poe's death, in answer to the abuse Griswold had heaped upon Poe in his memoir, Graham wrote:

> You have spoken with so much truth and delicacy of the deceased, and, with the magical touch of genius, have called so warmly up before me the memory of our lost friend as you and I both seemed to have known him, that I feel warranted in addressing to you the few

plain words I have to say in defense of his character as set down by Mr. Griswold.

Although the article, it seems, appeared in the 'New York Tribune,' it met my eye for the first time in the volume before me. I now purpose to take exception to it in the most public manner. I knew Mr. Poe well, far better than Mr. Griswold; and by the memory of old times, when he was editor of 'Graham's,' I pronounce this exceedingly ill-timed and unappreciative estimate of the character of our lost friend, *unfair* and *untrue*. It is Mr. Poe as seen by the writer while laboring under a fit of the nightmare, but so dark a picture has no resemblance to the *living* man. Accompanying these beautiful volumes it is an immortal infamy, the death's head over the entrance to the garden of beauty, a horror that clings to the brow of morning, whispering of murder. It haunts the memory through every page of his writings, leaving upon the heart a sensation of gloom, a feeling almost of terror. The only relief we feel is in knowing that it is not true, that it is a fancy sketch of a perverted, jaundiced vision. The man who could deliberately say of Edgar Allan Poe, in a notice of his life and writings prefacing volumes which were to become a priceless souvenir to all who loved him, that his death might startle many, '*but that few would be grieved by it*,' and blast the whole reputation of the man by such a paragraph as follows, is a judge dishonored. He is not Mr. Poe's peer, and I challenge him before the country even as a juror in the case.

In referring to Griswold's statement that "*you could not contradict him, but you raised his quick choler: you could not speak of wealth but his cheek paled with gnawing envy*," Graham, for Poe's friends, answered:

This is dastardly, and, what is worse, it is false. It is very adroitly done, with phrases very well turned, and with gleams of truth shining out from a setting so dusky, as to look devilish. Mr. Griswold does not feel the worth of the man he has undervalued; he had no sympathy in common with him, and has allowed old prejudices and old enmities to steal, insensibly perhaps, into the coloring of his picture. They were for years totally uncongenial, if not enemies, and during that period Mr. Poe, in a scathing lecture upon the "Poets of America," gave Mr. Griswold some raps over the knuckles of force sufficient to be remembered. He had, too, in the exercise of his functions as a critic, put to death summarily the literary reputation of some of Mr. Griswold's

best friends; and their ghosts cried in vain for him to avenge them during Poe's life-time, and it almost seems as if the present hacking at the cold remains of him who struck them down, is a sort of compensation for duty long delayed, for reprisal long desired, but deferred. But without this, the opportunities afforded Mr. Griswold to estimate the character of Poe occurred, in the main, after his stability had been wrecked, his whole nature in a degree changed and with all his prejudices aroused and active. Nor do I consider Mr. Griswold *competent*, with all the opportunities he may have cultivated or acquired, to act as his judge, to dissect that subtle and singularly fine intellect, to probe the motives and weigh the actions of that proud heart. . . . Among the true friends of Poe in this city—and he had some such here—there are those, I am sure, that *he* did not class among *villains;* nor do *they* feel easy when they see their old friend dressed out, in his grave, in the habiliments of a scoundrel. There is something to them, in this mode of procedure on the part of the literary executor that does not chime in with their notion 'of the true point of honor.'

This article is too long to quote in its entirety. It goes into business details proving that in all Poe's dealings with Graham he was punctiliously honorable, and it defends the moral character of Poe, disproving many of Griswold's charges. It contains so many details elsewhere discussed that I quote only the conclusion:

They had all of them looked upon our departed friend as singularly indifferent to wealth for its own sake, but as very positive in his opinions that the scale of social merit was not of the highest; that mind, somehow, was apt to be left out of the estimate altogether; and, partaking somewhat of his free way of thinking, his friends are startled to find they have entertained very unamiable convictions. As to his 'quick-choler' when he was contradicted, it depended a good deal on the party denying, as well as upon the subject discussed. He was quick, it is true, to perceive mere quacks in literature, and somewhat apt to be hasty, when pestered by them; but, upon most other questions his natural amiability was not easily disturbed. . . . His 'astonishing natural advantages' *had* been very assiduously cultivated; his 'daring spirit' was the anointed genius; his self-confidence the proud conviction of both; and it was with something of a lofty scorn that he *attacked*, as well as repelled, the crammed scholar of an hour, who attempted to palm upon him the ill-digested learning. Literature

with him was religion; and he, its high-priest, with a whip of scorpions, scourged the moneychangers from the temple. In all else, he had the docility and kind-heartedness of a child. No man was more quickly touched by a kindness, none more prompt to return for an injury. For three or four years I knew him intimately, and for eighteen months saw him almost daily, much of the time writing or conversing at the same desk, knowing all his hopes, his fears, and little annoyances of life, as well as his high-hearted struggle with adverse fate; yet he was always the same polished gentleman, the quiet, unobtrusive, thoughtful scholar, the devoted husband, frugal in his personal expenses, punctual and unwearied in his industry, and the *soul of honor* in all his transactions. This, of course, was in his better days, and by them *we* judge the man. But even after his habits had changed, there was no literary man to whom I would more readily advance money for labor to be done. . . . His pen was regulated by the highest sense of *duty*. By a keen analysis he separated and studied each piece which the skillful mechanist had put together. No part, however insignificant, or apparently unimportant, escaped the rigid and patient scrutiny of his sagacious mind.

The unfitted joint proved the bungler—the slightest blemish was a palpable fraud. He was the scrutinizing lapidary who detected and exposed the slightest flaw in diamonds. The gem of first water shone the brighter for the truthful setting of his calm praise. He had the finest touch of soul for beauty—a delicate and hearty appreciation of worth. If his praise appeared tardy, it was of priceless value when given. It was true as well as sincere. It was the stroke of honor that at once knighted the receiver. It was in the world of *mind* that he was king; and, with fierce audacity, he felt and proclaimed himself autocrat. As critic he was despotic, supreme. Yet no man with more readiness would soften a harsh expression at the request of a friend, or if he himself felt that he had infused too great a degree of bitterness into his article, none would more readily soften it down, after it was in type—though still maintaining the justness of his critical views. I do not believe that he wrote to give pain; but in combating what he conceived to be error, he used the strongest word that presented itself, even in conversation. He labored not so much to reform as to *exterminate* error, and thought the shortest process was to pull it up by the roots

Though this open letter was published in "Graham's Magazine" immediately following Griswold's issue of the memoir, it has not been disseminated and has not had the

publicity of Griswold's scurrilous article. It was not a part of the "Works" and did not circulate so extensively. Poe's biographers have not given it the publicity it deserves, and certain ones have only mentioned it generally, omitting all that reflects on Griswold and all that might serve as a defense of Poe.

Lambert A. Wilmer, in a notable book published in 1859, named "Our Press Gang," a collection of editorial writings now a bibliographical rarity, defended Poe. Wilmer was editor of the "Saturday Visiter," of Baltimore, in which Poe won a prize with "Tales of the Folio Club." For many years afterward Poe and Wilmer were more or less friendly, and corresponded at irregular intervals. It was the "Quacks of Helicon," written by Wilmer, that Poe so ardently defended, and in a review of which he strongly upheld Wilmer's charges of literary corruption.

While Wilmer's book was not written for the specific purpose of rehabilitating Poe, it does strongly corroborate many of Poe's contentions, and justifies the stand Poe took toward many writers and much that they wrote.

In speaking of a newspaper attack on the memory of Poe, Wilmer writes:

> Several years ago I published the following article in a Philadelphia weekly paper:
>
> 'Edgar A. Poe and his Calumniators.—There is a spurious biography of Edgar A. Poe which has been extensively published in newspapers and magazines. It is a hypocritical, canting document, expressing commiseration for the follies and 'crimes' of that 'poor outcast;' the writer being evidently just such an one as the Pharisee who thanked God that he was a better fellow than the publican. But we can tell the slanderous and malicious miscreant who composed the aforesaid biography, that Edgar Poe was not the man described by this anonymous scribbler. Some circumstances mentioned by the slanderous hypocrite we *know* to be false, and we have no doubt in the world that nearly all of his statements, intended to throw odium and discredit on the character of the deceased, are scandalous inventions.
>
> We have much more to say on this subject, and we pledge ourselves

to show that the article we speak of is false and defamatory, when the skulking author of it becomes magnanimous enough to take the responsibility by fixing his *name* to his malignant publication.' I do not know that this *vindication* was copied by a single paper; whereas the whole press of the country seemed desirous of giving circulation and authenticity to the slanders.

Again, under the title "Defamation of the Dead," Wilmer refers to the newspaper attacks on the memory of Poe:

The late Edgar A. Poe has been represented by the American newspapers in general as a reckless libertine and a confirmed inebriate. I do not recognize him by this description, though I was intimately acquainted with the man, and had every opportunity to study his character. I have been in company with him every day for many months together; and, within a period of twelve years, I did not see him inebriated; no, not in a single instance. I do not believe that he was ever habitually intemperate until he was made so by grief and many bitter disappointments. And, with respect to the charge of libertinism, I have similar testimony to offer. Of all men that I ever knew, he was the most *passionless;* and I appeal to his writings for confirmation of this report. Poets of ardent temperament, such as Anacreon, Ovid, Byron, and Tom Moore, will display their constitutional peculiarity in their literary compositions; but Edgar Poe never wrote a line that gives expression to a libidinous thought. The female creations of his fancy are all either statues or angels. His conversation, at all times, was as chaste as that of a vestal, and his conduct, while I knew him, was correspondingly blameless.

Poe, during his lifetime, was feared and hated by many newspaper editors and other literary animalcules, some of whom, or their friends, had been the subjects of his scorching critiques; and others disliked him, naturally enough, because he was a man of superior intellect. While he lived, these resentful gentlemen were discreetly silent, but they nursed their wrath to keep it warm, and the first intelligence of his death was the signal for a general onslaught. The primal slander against the deceased bard was published in a leading journal of Philadelphia, the 'literary editor' of which [English] had formerly received not only a critical rebuke, but something like personal chastisement also, from the hands of the departed poet.

Since that time, by continued and well directed efforts, the newspapers of our country have succeeded in giving Poe a character 'as

black as Vulcan's stithy,' and in this hideous drapery, woven by demoniac malice, the unrivalled poet of America is now presented to the world.

It was the article published in the "Edinburgh Review," quoted by the editor of the "Ladies' Repository" that induced Mrs. Whitman to break her long silence. She took up the gauge of battle by publishing in 1860 her monograph on Poe—"Edgar Poe and His Critics," the first book entirely devoted to a study of his morals and to the rehabilitation of his name. It is an appreciation rather than a biography.

In the preface Mrs. Whitman says:

Dr. Griswold's Memoir of Edgar Poe has been extensively read and circulated; its perverted facts and baseless assumptions have been adopted into every subsequent memoir and notice of the poet, and have been translated into many languages. For ten years this great wrong to the dead has passed unchallenged and unrebuked.

It has been assumed by a recent English critic that 'Edgar Poe had no friends.' As an index to a more equitable and intelligible theory of the idiosyncrasies of his life, and as an earnest protest against the spirit of Dr. Griswold's unjust memoir, these pages are submitted to his more candid readers and critics by One of his Friends.

This was a confession not easy to make, for it was to Mrs. Whitman that Poe was engaged to be married while he was still a resident of Fordham; and it was his reported actions with reference to breaking the engagement that Griswold so foully used in his attempt to blacken the character of Poe.

Quoting from Griswold's Memoir:

He said to an acquaintance in New York, who congratulated him upon the prospect of his union with a person of such genius and so many virtues, 'it is a mistake: I am not going to be married.' 'Why, Mr. Poe, I understand that the banns have been published.' 'I cannot help what you have heard, my dear Madam, but mark me, I will not marry her.' He left town the same evening and next day was reeling through the streets of the city which was the lady's home, and in the evening—that should have been the evening before the bridal,

in his drunkenness he committed such outrages as made it necessary to summon the police. Here was no insanity leading to indulgence: he went from New York with a determination thus to induce an ending of the engagement; and he succeeded.

Even had this story been true, the use of so prominent a woman's name to point a tale was not a chivalrous act. As a matter of fact the whole scene, so graphically painted, was a fabrication and the proof that it was not true was at once offered, but Griswold never retracted it.

Mrs. Whitman did break her engagement with Poe because she found he had not kept his promise of abstinence. He was not rude in her presence nor did he exhibit any abnormality except as she has described. It was she who broke the engagement in spite of Poe's protests and his promises of reform.

Mrs. Whitman, in a letter to Gill, declared what already had been offered in evidence, that:

> No such scene as that described by Dr. Griswold ever took place in my presence. No one, certainly no woman who had the slightest acquaintance with Edgar Poe, could have credited the story for an instant. He was instinctively and essentially a gentleman, utterly incapable, even in moments of excitement and delirium, of such an outrage as Dr. Griswold has ascribed to him.

She dismissed the Griswold allegations very briefly:

> It is not our purpose at present specially to review Dr. Griswold's numerous misrepresentations, and misstatements. Some of the more injurious of these anecdotes were disproved, during the life of Dr. Griswold, in the New York Tribune, and other leading journals, without eliciting from him any public statement in explanation or apology. Quite recently we have had, through the columns of the 'Home Journal,' the refutation of another calumnious story, which for ten years has been going the rounds of the English and American periodicals.
>
> We have authority for stating that many of the disgraceful anecdotes, so industriously collected by Dr. Griswold, are utterly fabulous, while others are perversions of the truth, more injurious in their effects than unmitigated fiction. We propose simply to point out some unformed critical estimates which have obtained currency among

readers who have had but a partial acquaintance with Mr. Poe's more imaginative writings, and to record our own impressions of the character and genius of the poet, as derived from personal observation and from the testimony of those who knew him.

Mrs. Whitman was a woman of remarkable personality. John Hay (himself a marked example of a sane genius with depressive seizures) described the dominating influence she exerted over him while he was at Brown University.

Mrs. Whitman, knowing her subject and dealing with so many phases of it that were personally embarrassing, treated the whole matter as only a woman of great refinement could. It is true that the picture she draws is colored by an overweening tenderness; but one cannot too harshly criticize grief for a dead friend, and if tears of sorrow blind the eyes and mental reservations prevent over-full statements of matters essentially personal, can we wonder if the outline occasionally is blurred? She does not refer to her own close association with Poe, but describes, in a manner purely impersonal, not so much her admiration of Poe, the man, as her admiration for Poe, the man of letters.

She describes, as only a woman can, what there was in Poe that so strongly appealed to the women with whom he associated. Apparently, the basis of that appeal was the complete deference and the chivalrous attitude which, even in thought, characterized Poe's treatment of women. Never in the whole course of his life, either in what he wrote or what he said, did he treat woman other than as the angel embodiment of man. In Mrs. Whitman's sketch is to be noted especially an absolute freedom from any touch of jealousy as she couples Poe's name with that of other women with which it had been associated:

> There is a quiet drawing room in ——— Street, New York,—a sort of fragrant and delicious 'clovernook' in the heart of the noisy city—where hung some three years ago, the original painting from which this engraving [referring to the portrait accompanying Poe's first volume of collected works] is a copy. Happening to meet there at the time a

company of authors and poets, among whom were Mary Forest, Alice and Phoebe Cary, the Stoddards, T. B. Aldrich and others, we heard one of the party say, in speaking of the portrait, that its aspect was that of a beautiful and desolate shrine from which the Genius had departed. . . . Near this luminous but impassive face, with its sad and soulless eyes, was a portrait of Poe's unrelenting biographist. In a recess opposite hung a picture of fascinating Mrs. ———, whose genius both had so fervently admired, and for whose coveted praise and friendship both had been competitors. Looking at the beautiful portrait of this lady—the face so full of enthusiasm, and dreamy tropical sunshine—remembering the eloquent words of her praise, as expressed in the prodigal and passionate exaggerations of her verse, one ceases to wonder at the rivalries and enmities enkindled in the hearts of those who admired her genius and her grace,—rivalries which the grave itself could not cancel or appease.

Again she wrote:

A woman of fine genius, who at this time made his acquaintance, says, in some recently published comments on his writings: 'It was in the brilliant circles that assembled in the winter of 1845-6 at the homes of Dr. Dewey, Miss Anna C. Lynch, Mr. Lawson, and others, that we first met Edgar Poe. His manners were at these reunions refined and pleasing, and his style and scope of conversation that of a gentleman and a scholar. Whatever may have been his previous career, there was nothing in his manner nor in his appearance to indicate excesses. He delighted in the society of superior women and had an exquisite perception of all the graces of manner, and shades of expression. He was an admiring listener, and an unobtrusive observer. We all recollect the interest felt at the time in everything emanating from his pen—the relief it was from the dullness of ordinary writers—the certainty of something fresh and suggestive. His critiques were read with avidity; not that he convinced the judgment, but that people felt their ability and their courage. Right or wrong he was terribly in earnest.'

Mrs. Whitman dissented from the frequently expressed view that Poe's own personality was infused into that of the characters which he often so vividly depicted in his weird tales and poems, but she did believe that his abnormal mentality was directly responsible for the character of his creative work:

His proud intellectual assumption of the supremacy of the individual soul *was but an expression of his imperious longings for immortality and its recoil from the haunting phantasms of death and annihilation;* while the theme of all his more imaginative writings is a love that survives the dissolution of the mortal body and oversweeps the grave. His mental and temperamental idiosyncracies fitted him to come readily into rapport with psychal and spiritual influences. Many of his strange narratives had a degree of truth in them which he was unwilling to avow. In one of this class he makes the narrator say, "I cannot even now regard these experiences as a dream, yet it is difficult for us now to say how otherwise they should be termed. *Let us suppose only that the soul of man, today, is on the brink of stupendous psychal discoveries.* . . . He often spoke of the imageries and incidents of his inner life as more vivid and veritable than those of his outer experience. We find in some pencilled notes appended to a manuscript copy of one of his later poems—*Ligeia*—the words 'all that I have here expressed were actually present to me. Remember the mental condition which gave rise to *Ligeia*—recall the passage of which I spoke, and observe the coincidence!' With all the fine alchemy of his subtle intellect he sought to analyze the character and the conditions of this introverted life. 'I regard these visions,' he says, 'even as they arise, with an awe which in some measure moderates or tranquilizes the ecstasy—I so regard them through a conviction that this ecstasy, in itself, is of a character supernal to the human nature—*is a glimpse of the spirit's outer world.*' . . . His mind indeed was a 'Haunted Palace,' echoing to the footfalls of angels and demons. 'No man,' he says, 'has recorded, no man has dared to record, the wonders of his inner life.' Is there then, no significance in this 'supernatural soliciting?' Is there no evidence of a wise purpose, an epochal fitness, in the appearance, at this precise era, of a mind so rarely gifted, and accessible from peculiarities of psychal and physical organization to the subtle vibrations of an ethereal medium conveying but feeble impressions to the senses of ordinary persons?

The peculiar character of his intellect seemed without a prototype in literature. He had more than De Quincey's power of analysis, with a constructive unity and completeness of which the great English essayist has given no indication. His pre-eminence in constructive and analytical skill was beginning to be universally admitted, and the fame and prestige of his genius were rapidly increasing. . . . A recent and not too lenient critic tells us that 'it was his sensitiveness to artistic imperfections, rather than any malignity of feeling, that

made his criticisms so severe, and procured him a host of enemies among persons towards whom he entertained no personal ill-will.'

Mrs. Whitman's final estimate is characteristic of the woman:

> We confess to a half faith in the old superstition of the significance of anagrams when we find, in the transposed letters of Edgar Poe's name, the words, *a God-peer:* words which, taken in connection with his daring speculations, seem to have in them a mocking and malign import which is not man's nor angel's.

The book is filled with personal reminiscences and it contains many anecdotes showing Poe's lovable nature and the tender care he gave his wife. It barely touches on matters controversial, nor is there more than a sympathetic reference to his sins of commission. While she does not deny that Poe had occasional periods of intoxication, she draws a picture of his sufferings following these outbreaks that make us, who know the compulsory nature of these seizures, more keenly realize the bitter sorrow that followed and how fully he expiated them.:

> Poe's private letters to his friends offer abundant evidence that he was not insensible to the keenest pangs of remorse. Again and again did he say to the Demon that tracked his path 'Anathema Maranatha' but again and again did it return to torture and subdue. He saw the handwriting on the wall but had no power to avert the impending doom.

Apparently the writings of Poe made a strong appeal to the psychical beliefs that are said to have dominated Mrs. Whitman. She was a student of the occult and strongly believed in spirit manifestations.

No subject of recent years has excited more interest among psychologists than this question of a "sixth sense." Although eminent names recently have been added to those who acknowledge definite belief in spiritualistic phenomena, no answer can be made that may be considered final; nor has any proof been adduced that this "sixth

sense," which I believe does exist, is more of a phenomenon than the other five, except that only certain highly organized "sensitives," or mediums, possess it and for this reason develop auto-hypnosis.

Mrs. J. K. Barney, who was an intimate friend of Mrs. Whitman, and who was invited to meet Poe during one of his visits, gives this remarkable account of an incident that is worth recording:

> On one of his visits to Providence, Mrs. Whitman invited a number of literary people to her home that they might have the opportunity of seeing Poe and listening to his wonderful converse. The guests were assembled—all distinguished people—discussing books and the like. Poe and Mrs. Whitman sat across the room from each other. They were theorizing on the poetic principle. After a time the other voices ceased. All were drawn toward Poe, whose eyes were gleaming and whose utterance was most eloquent. His eyes were fixed on Mrs. Whitman. After another time Poe stopped talking, keeping his eyes on Helen. Of a sudden the company perceived that Poe and Helen were greatly agitated. Simultaneously both rose from their chairs and walked toward the center of the room. Meeting he held her in his arms, kissed her; they stood for a moment, then he led her to her seat. There was a dead silence through all this strange proceeding.

Whether or not Poe so intended it, this was a marvelous exhibition of the mesmeric power he unconsciously exerted over the "sensitives" whom he so strongly influenced.

For the decade following these publications few references to Poe or his work can be found. The Redfield edition continued as the authoritative Poe collection and until the year 1876 it was republished with the Griswold memoir still occupying its post of honor uncontradicted—even unquestioned. The few things written concerning Poe I have found most difficult to collect, not only because of the obscurity of the journals in which they were published, but especially for the reason that only incidental references were made either to him or to the things he wrote. Those who attempted the rehabilitation of Poe

found it difficult to controvert the statements that had been so confidently made, and were at a loss to give an authoritative answer, even though it was known that personal animosity and a vindictive spirit had animated many statements contained in the Griswold memoir.

In England James Hannay had attempted to stem the tide of public prejudice and had written several short biographical sketches, but he could not speak with authority. Later, John H. Ingram became a most active defender, but his statements were so strongly partisan that no credence was given them. However, these two writers did succeed in casting some doubt upon certain parts of the Griswold memoir and their defense encouraged others to make independent investigations.

In the early 70's there was a Poe revival, partly caused by the many American and English biographies, but mainly due to Poe's increasing literary renown. There were many still living—a few, unfortunately, the possessors of senile memories—who insisted on recalling Poe as they remembered him. They had entertained an "angel unawares," and they believed this to be a good reason for recalling, thirty years later, all the facts of Poe's life, occasionally reinforced with their imagination.

The most flagrant offender was the physician that cared for Poe at the time of his death, although he had many prolix *confreres*.

Quotations have already been made from Sartain's "Reminiscences" as to Poe's mental state during an attack of delirium. Among other interesting matters that Sartain relates was an interview between Griswold and English:

> Speaking of Poe recalls to me an amusing scene I witnessed in my office between two of the literary fraternity, Rufus W. Griswold and the well-known author of *Ben Bolt* [Thomas Dunn English.] The latter was chatting delightfully with me when in walked Griswold. I knew of course that they must be acquainted, and yet noticing that they acted

like strangers I apologized for neglecting to introduce them and for assuming that they knew each other. 'Oh yes,' said one grimly, 'we know one another.' So I saw there was bad blood between them. A cheerless talk ensued for a time, when a name was spoken by chance that had a magical effect. It was Poe, and they fraternized at once, giving it to him right and left, agreeing that he was a most unjust critic and a bad fellow in every way. The fact is Poe made himself enemies all around by the cutting severity of his criticisms.

An episode that has received much attention was Poe's courtship of Mrs. Shelton.

The underlying motive that induced Poe to renew his suit to Mrs. Shelton was not the revival of an old love, or such mental derangement as he exhibited in his pursuit of Mrs. Osgood and his ardent courtship of Mrs. Whitman. He recognized that his life work was finished—as he stated in one of his last letters to Mrs. Clemm "I have no desire to live since I have finished "Eureka." It was probably a desperate attempt to find some harbor of refuge for his storm-tossed life, with possibly a renewal of his Stylus obsession. Even while he was arranging the details of this marriage he planned, in a letter written to Mrs. Clemm, that he would so place his future home as to be "near Annie." There is no foundation for the assertion made by Moran in his "Defense," that Mrs. Shelton was "his first love, his *Annabel Lee*."

Moran's statement was inspired by Mrs. Shelton, it was written at her request, and it was dedicated to her. This is the same Mrs. Shelton whom Poe, as a boy, was said to have loved, and to whom, under the name Susan Royster, he was engaged while still a resident of Richmond. In his later life, after the death of Virginia, they again met and their engagement was rumored. Mrs. Shelton was an "affluent" widow with such strong religious feeling that, during the time of Poe's courtship, she gave, as a reason for refusing to entertain him: "I told him I

was on my way to church and that I allowed nothing to interfere with this duty."

It seems there must have been some amatory passages between Poe and Mrs. Shelton for Poe wrote Mrs. Clemm: "I think she loves me more devotedly than any one I ever knew & I cannot help loving her in return." That he wished to make Mrs. Shelton believe he remembered her, and had always cherished her picture is evidenced by a letter he wrote Mrs. Clemm asking her to furnish certain suppositious proofs of this unforgotten love—the text of which he enclosed.

Surely this was not an ardent courtship and if it was a continuation of the love-affair that is said to have burned so brightly twenty years before, it is evident that the flame had sunk to a feeble flicker. A little later it was completely extinguished; for there were mutual recriminations and demands strenuously made both by Poe and Mrs. Shelton that letters which had passed between them should be returned. Yet in her old age Mrs. Shelton treasured the memory of Poe, insisted that she was his ideal Annabel Lee, and that it was she who had inspired Poe to write:

> For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
> Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
> And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes
> Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
> And so, all the night tide, I lie down by the side
> Of my darling, my darling, *my life* and my bride
> In her sepulchre there by the sea—
> In her tomb by the sounding sea.

It is doubtful if Miss Royster could have inspired this poem; it is certain that the twenty-year-after Mrs. Shelton did not. Not only was she alive and still in the performance of her "religious duties," but before *Annabel*

Lee was published she had threatened Poe with a lawsuit for the return of her letters.

Many other women have claimed this same distinction. They ignored Virginia.

Mrs. Weiss writes concerning Mrs. Shelton:

> Mrs. Shelton during a few days absence of Poe at the country home of John Mackenzie, came to Duncan Lodge and appealed to Mrs. Mackenzie to influence Poe in returning her letters. I saw her on this occasion—a tall, rather masculine-looking woman, who drew her veil over her face as she passed us on the porch, though I caught a glimpse of large, shadowy, light blue eyes which must have once been handsome.

Mrs. Susan A. Weiss, in 1907, published a book entitled "Home Life of Poe," in which an intimate sketch of Poe's two last visits to Richmond is purported to be given. It is interesting because it contains details of the events that transpired immediately preceding Poe's death.

From her own account Poe was on friendly terms with her, confided in her literary judgment, and discussed many personal matters relating to his plans. Evidently she was a keen observer and, anticipating Poe's fame and the curiosity that would be aroused regarding the facts of these Richmond visits, she gathered up many details and pigeon-holed them for future reference. The facts she relates are interesting, and the Richmond gossip of those days makes entertaining reading. Whether they are the reminiscences of one who has idealized Poe and who cannot distinguish fact from fiction, or whether she is one whose memory has become weakened and has visualized these circumstances through the rheumy eyes of age, or whether, in her desire that her name descend to posterity linked with that of Poe, she has romanced with known facts, are questions difficult to answer.

Authorities are not agreed as to the amount of faith one should place in these reminiscences; and it has been

claimed that, as an imaginative writer, Mrs. Weiss ranks with Dr. Moran.

Woodberry who, as a rule, accepted no statement for the text of his "Life of Poe" that did not appeal to his critical judgment, leaving all else for his "notes," accepts Mrs. Weiss as an authority, and bases the details of the concluding events of Poe's life on her statements.

Whitty, another well-known Poe authority, who lives in Richmond and who is conversant with many statements that have never been published because of the possibility that they can be classed as unauthenticated gossip, does not give credence to all that is contained in Mrs. Weiss's book as a detailed and reliable account of Poe's life.

Although I quote Mrs. Weiss I question the value of her testimony. She was a mute—an infirmity that rendered almost impossible some of the conversations and much of the personal intercourse so distinctly remembered and so accurately recorded in the "Home Life of Poe."

The thing that made this revival notable was that no one seemed to remember anything to Poe's discredit. Time had erased all personal bitterness. There was one exception. Richard Henry Stoddard, who at least on one occasion had met Poe, published his "Personal Recollections" that contained some interesting Poe matter. Later this was used as an introduction to Poe's Works as republished by Widdleton. It contained no reiteration of the Griswold charges, yet it detailed unkind statements as to his personal recollection of Poe. He could not forget the one memorable occasion on which they met, even if it was that relation a door mat bears to the foot that stamps upon it. Possibly the most sensitive thing on earth is the pride of a young author as to his "Rejected Addresses."

I knocked at the street-door, and was presently shown up to Poe's rooms on the second or third floor. He received me very kindly. I told my errand, and he promised that my Ode should be

printed next week. I was struck with his poetic manner, and the elegance of his appearance. He was slight and pale, I saw, with large and luminous eyes, and was dressed in black. When I quitted the room I could not but see his wife, who was lying upon a bed, apparently asleep. She, too, was dressed in black, and was pale and wasted. 'Poor lady,' I thought, 'she is dying of consumption.' . . I bought the next number of the *Broadway Journal*, but my Ode was not in it. It was mentioned, however, somewhat in this style: 'We decline to publish the "Ode on a Grecian Flute" unless we can be assured of its authenticity.' . . I made time to take another long walk to the office of the *Broadway Journal*, and asked again for Mr. Poe. . . He was sitting on a chair asleep, but the publisher awoke him. He was in a morose mood. 'Mr. Poe,' I said, 'I have called to assure you of the authenticity of the "Ode on a Grecian Flute." He gave me the lie direct, declared that I never wrote it, and threatened to chastise me unless I left him at once. . . I left him as he desired, and walked slowly home, 'chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies.'

Evidently Stoddard found Poe in one of his "moods."

Stoddard has been regarded, and has been quoted, as a Griswold supporter in this Poe controversy, and it is not in evidence that he ever publicly criticised the Griswold memoir; yet, by a strange circumstance, the "Edgar A. Poe Shrine," recently opened in Richmond and which has become the recipient of much valuable Poe material, is in possession of a letter written by Stoddard to Samuel Henshaw. J. H. Whitty, president of the "Shrine," allows me to quote concerning the Stoddard letter the following statement: "The 'Edgar A. Poe Shrine' has in its posession an autograph letter, dated September 24, 1872, written by Stoddard to Henshaw, in which Stoddard states that Griswold took no pains, in his Poe materials, to sift facts from fancies, and that Griswold neither could, nor did he attempt to weigh evidence as it concerned Poe."

These published reminiscences were indicative of the pride America was beginning to take in the name of Poe, and of her desire publicly to honor Poe's memory. The culmination

of this movement was the public monument erected over the remains of Poe at Baltimore in 1875. Later other evidences of the appreciation in which Poe was held were made manifest. Probably the greatest honor conferred was the Actor's Monument sculptured by Richard H. Park, for this was the first honor of a national, and not sectional, character.

In the year 1877 William F. Gill published "The Life of Edgar Allan Poe." This was the first systematic attempt to controvert Griswold's statements and to rehabilitate Poe's character. In preparing this biography Gill consulted a few of Poe's old friends among whom was Mrs. Clemm. He also had access to original manuscripts and correspondence, but he admitted nothing unfavorable to Poe, or that in any way explained his abnormal mental state.

Gill is not an artist, and must not be blamed because the resulting delineation has not the fidelity of a Hogarth or the strength of Rembrandt. At least, he did the best he could; and he was the first biographer, after nearly thirty years of "consent," to attempt to gather the data and clearly to present the facts on which a biography of Poe should rest. That he was carried away by enthusiasm and a love for his subject was a temperamental fault and, in the circumstances, excusable. His life of Poe cannot be accepted either as critical or unbiased.

Although Hannay's effort to rehabilitate Poe met with adverse criticism, and his statements, as against those of Griswold and Briggs, received slight credence, he continued a faithful, though unadvised, defender of the poet. It should be noted, however, that he regarded Poe's untoward acts as the result of temporary mental disturbance rather than the consequence of a vicious life.

Another Englishman, John H. Ingram, wrote many papers dealing with Poe and his traducers, and he prefixed a memoir to an edition of Poe's works in which he attempted

to disprove many of Griswold's statements and to bring out much testimony that tended to establish not only the falsity of these statements but to entirely rehabilitate the good name of Poe.

In 1880 Ingram published an amplification of his former studies: "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life, Letters and Opinions."

This work remains a valuable contribution to the life of Poe because in it a critical study was attempted and, for the first time, many of Griswold's allegations were questioned and certain of them were refuted. In his chapter on the "Biographies of Edgar Allan Poe," Ingram sharply criticised Didier, another Poe memorialist, for "forgetting in the hurry of publication, to acknowledge the chief source of his 'much fresh and interesting information.'"

Ingram's memory proved equally treacherous in that he made no mention of Gill's "Life," although he discussed many of the same questions that Gill formerly had argued:

> In March 1850 was published, in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, what Griswold styles an 'Eulogium' on Poe, but what really was a still more dastardly attack on the dead man than the unsavory 'Ludwig' article. It had evidently been written and printed in hot haste, and was so disgraceful and cowardly that the editorial proprietor of the magazine, Mr. John R. Thompson, deemed it necessary to append a short printed note, to the effect that had it not been inserted during his absence, and not been seen by him till too late to stop it, it should not have appeared in the *Messenger*. Who wrote this article? It is generally ascribed to Mr. J. M. Daniel; yet, strange to say, it not only uses lengthy passages of 'Ludwig's' sketch without inverted commas, or other signs of quotation, but, when Griswold's long 'Memoir of Poe' appeared in the *International Magazine*, he also made use of long extracts from the 'Eulogium' without acknowledgment. Certainly he does refer to it as his authority for one of the blackest crimes he charges Poe with, and which he himself not unaptly styles unfit for 'any register but that of hell.' Was not this miscalled 'defender' Griswold himself or some one acting under his inspiration?

The few delinquencies of Poe that Ingram accepted as true were explained in a manner that does credit to Ingram's

ingenuity, although they were not convincing answers. This partisanship was unfortunate. To abuse Griswold and to ignore the delinquencies with which Poe was charged was not a sufficient answer to serious accusations. Too much was known of Poe's eccentricities and of his alcoholic habits either to ignore them or pass them over with a simple denial. Concessions and explanations given by former biographers were judged by Ingram to have been unwisely made:

> The best known of these was the essay of Baudelaire, and it is chiefly remarkable as the attempt, by a man of genius, to explain Poe's character *as described by Griswold*, by an ingenious theory of his own. Of course he failed in *that*, however valuable his essay otherwise may be and truly is. Next in importance to the French critic's characterization of Poe, is that of James Hannay. It is a charming and appreciative sketch, but having no biographical details other than Griswold's to go by, and being as instinctively attracted to Poe as Baudelaire, Hannay also started a theory as ingenious and as unsatisfactory as his to account for the poet's presumed misdeeds.

Baudelaire's belief that alcohol and opium were the source of Poe's power of imagination and that from these he obtained his inspiration, was rejected. Nor did he agree that temporary mental states, suggested by Hannay and known to have afflicted so many men of genius with recurring states of mental depression, was a satisfactory explanation. He regarded Poe as a maligned and misjudged man, and failed to recognize the nervous diathesis as the basis for certain of his vagaries.

From a study of these fragmentary and biased biographies it became evident that a new method of approach must be found in order to gain an intelligent understanding of Poe's life and character. The thing most necessary was a sifting of true statements from false as they related to Poe's neurosis, and a re-presentation of Poe facts as distinguished from the Poe myth. As frequently happens,

when the necessity arises a man can be found capable of accomplishing the required task.

This work was assigned by Charles Dudley Warner, editor of the "American Men of Letters" series, to George E. Woodberry, at that time a young and unknown writer.

Woodberry, that painstaking biographer on whom I have depended for many of my facts, did not select his subject, nor was he drawn to it by personal or literary inclination; his architect set him the task and, like a master carpenter, he builded as well as he knew. Selecting sound material where strength was needed, he often left knotholes as peepsights, and made no effort to conceal or throw aside inferior and, occasionally, rotten material. Neither the situation nor the plan inspired him.

> I was asked by my friend, the late Charles Dudley Warner, in 1883, to write the life of Poe for the 'American Men of Letters Series,' which he was then editing. My attention had never been drawn to Poe, nor my interest specially excited by his works; so that I entered upon my task, my first important literary commission, with a fresh mind; and, though contact with the subject may have bred prejudice, I had none at the outset.

This from a literary man who proposed dispassionately to discuss and anatomize a genius, not as a surgeon would perform some merciful operation on a patient he loved, but as a vivisectionist would dissect some unfriended animal in order to demonstrate the circulation of the blood, and would run his scalpel into all the heart's compartments, and play with its fibers! No pity, no love, swayed the hand; only the deliberate purpose to demonstrate a fact, however cruelly the knife hurt, however wildly the heart palpitated.

To write a popular biography one must love one's subject. Had not Boswell loved, as well as revered, his Johnson, how easily could he have dwelt on the foibles, the vanities, the contradictions, and the absurdities which invariably are a part of the lives of the wisest and sanest,

and which, in the case of Johnson, were specially conspicuous—and have spoiled his biography.

Woodberry's statement, "contact with the subject may have bred prejudice," is explained by the fact that this early study led to his later association with the Poe MSS., that Griswold had "assumed." Woodberry had been asked to edit these papers and, later, had edited the Poe-Chivers correspondence.

In this publication Woodberry made a dispassionate and careful study of all the known facts of Poe's life, and an intelligent effort to elucidate the many obscure points that had been controversial, or that were unknown. Much new information was furnished, and Woodberry believed that he discovered passages in Poe's life which further research may, or may not, uphold.

In his preface Woodberry discussed the difficulties under which he had labored because of the many conflicting statements and the diverse opinions still held, and he gave the data on which he relied for his estimate:

> The statements of fact in these sources are extremely conflicting, doubtful, and contested; and in view of this, as well as of the spirit of rancor excited in any discussion of Poe's character, the author has made this, so far as was possible, a documentary biography, has verified all facts positively stated at first hand, and has felt obliged to assign the authority followed, in any questionable assertions, in foot notes. . . . Notwithstanding the amount of printed matter regarding Poe, his life has not been exhaustively treated. The larger portion of the following pages consists of wholly new information, or of old statements so radically corrected as to become new.

Woodberry called his work a "Documentary Life," as it was founded on contemporary evidence usually of a documentary nature. He does not overstate its value as a study. Nothing better has been offered and while, in my judgment, it is deficient because of a failure to understand and exhibit the underlying neurosis on which many of Poe's erratic acts were based, at least these were not mag-

nified. Possibly it was not to be expected that Woodberry either could fully comprehend, or scientifically explain the underlying compulsions that were the basis of these actions.

Woodberry later revised and amplified this documentary statement, converting it into a biography in which he included a comprehensive study of Poe's writings, and set forth his own conception of Poe's personality.

The "Documentary Biography," as a source of reference has been overshadowed by this more recent and greatly amplified "Literary Biography," with which Woodberry's name is now so definitely associated. This is regrettable because, while the first study made no pretense of being other than a compilation and a special research into the facts of Poe's life and attempted no personal estimate, the later work not only discussed all Poe wrote, but undertook to make a character study that would elucidate Poe's personal equation. Although this is our most authoritative biography and does possess much of both literary and biographical interest, it is deficient in certain qualities that I believe are necessary for a correct delineation of Poe's puzzling and ill-understood personality.

> Through these years information naturally came to me, also, from other sources, though I have never engaged in personal investigation since writing the former biography . . . I have aimed also to present in the text the facts of Poe's career as they lie in my own mind, in the notes I have allowed others to speak freely, for praise or dispraise, in order that all may have a fair field where there is so great a controversy. In the former biography I excluded much and suppressed much of what I thought the world would willingly let die; but this proved a fruitless attempt to assist oblivion, and I have, in the present work, at least noticed all that had been said or alleged on this subject.

Woodberry further explained his reason for writing this second biography: "I have aimed to make this a literary biography; as such it has two special interests, in that it is a life led outside New England, and that it embodies much

contemporaneous literary history not involved in any life of our great writers."

Although this "Literary Biography" of Woodberry possessed many admirable features, it failed because in his "Creation" there was a malformation of an important vital organ. Like Frankenstein who attempted to create a man perfect in symmetry, marvelously articulated with every muscle, nerve and organ properly placed, and with a mind so keen in its perceptions, and endowed with such intelligence that it was able to circumvent, and, in time, to overwhelm its creator, so does Woodberry reconstruct a Poe who possesses a brain that functioned normally with a mental capacity unequalled by any of his contemporaries; yet somewhere there was a fatal flaw, for none of the generous impulses and humanitarian qualities animated it. This Poe construction fails in recalling to us a human possessing amiable traits and consideration for those around him. It may be asked, as it was in the discussion of Griswold's "Memoir," if there could be found "no cheeriness in the boy—no casual acts of kindness —no adhesion to old friendships—no sympathy with the poor and unhappy?"

Woodberry's delineation is that of a cold, misanthropic, and lonely individual influenced by none of the human passions, warmed by none of the genial qualities necessary for friendly associations, swayed by none of the finer impulses or human attributes that differentiate us from the lower creations—an intellectual being that lacks a "heart." Poe, the man, is ignored. It is only Poe, the writer, that is described. Although admiration is expressed for Poe's literary genius, and the things he wrote are fully discussed, nowhere and in no way does Woodberry exhibit any sympathy with his subject, or show any understanding either of Poe's abnormal state or of the "*quid pro quo*" literary world by which he was surrounded,

so different from the Holmes-Bryant-Longfellow coterie that dominated New England thought and habit. This was well organized and no unharmonious voice could disturb the mutual admiration and complacent toleration. Each, in his way, possessed many excellencies that in no way interferred with the honors bestowed upon others: rather this very solidarity tended to uphold each individual's claim, whether or not he quite attained to the Heights. No wonder that Poe's raucous voice breaking into this harmonious diapason of self-glorification, attacking their literary high-priest, was bitterly resented and was explained by their chief "organ of expression," "The Harbinger,"—edited by the "Brook-Farm Phalanx" as Poe's method of seeking:

> Notoriety, through a certain blackguard warfare which he has been waging against the poets and newspaper critics of New England, and which it would have been more charitable to impute to insanity.

As Woodberry suggests, Poe "led a life outside New England," and for this reason was a *rara avis* worthy of study. Had he been thus environed Woodberry would have been, temperamentally, better fitted to have understood him. His sympathetic treatment of Hawthorne required no special effort because the qualities delineated were a part both of the subject and of his biographer and their expression was but an exhibition of literary skill; however, transfiguration of the frigid personality of Emerson into the semblance of an emotional, considerate and real human being makes it certain that had Poe remained in Boston and had he become acclimated to the ozone of its literary atmosphere, even the Boston critics would have applauded; and Woodberry would have given him more sympathetic consideration in his sickness and destitution. In spite of this one defect, Woodberry's "Life of Poe" remains the best guide and fairest commentary on the facts of Poe's life and he is to be especially commended because

of the great service he has rendered Poe in disproving many of Griswold's false statements, even though he failed to appreciate the Evil that was a part of Poe; or because of this inheritance, to excuse Poe's misdeeds. After all this is a matter of individual opinion and each biographer must view this subject from his own mental horizon. Woodberry's own expectation and ambition have been realized: "Whatever shall be the fortune of this work, I am amply rewarded by the conviction that I have, at least, made the way easier for that ideal biographer who, when he comes, shall be perfect in good-sense, good-will, and discretion."

Since Woodberry's exhaustive study, little can be added to the known facts of Poe's life. The controversial matters necessarily give wide range for speculation, but it is not probable that much more of material importance will be discovered.

The last biographer that will be discussed is Professor James A. Harrison of the University of Virginia. Imbued with the love of his subject, and swayed because of personal association and great sympathy, his biography gives ample appreciation of all that could magnify the accomplishments and lend glory to his idol; and that associates with his beloved State of Virginia, and her Queen City, Richmond, the name of her greatest writer. "The Virginia Poe" was well named, even if Poe was born in Boston.

If Woodberry was lacking in heart, Harrison is overburdened with it. This hypertrophy renders the biography, as a biography, worthless so far as real facts and their proper relations are concerned. Harrison has not properly estimated the values that should be attached to the controversial life of Poe, nor does he appreciate the abnormal and darker side of Poe's life as dominated by an over-ruling neurosis. In comparison with Woodberry's

Life it also errs in prolixity, lack of systematization, and clearness of expression. There is no serious attempt made to clear up the Griswold charges, and Harrison's statements ignore many phases of Poe's life that even the most lenient of biographers should not have entirely overlooked. These cannot be minimized except by a full explanation of the condition underlying them.

Ancestral details have been lacking. All biographers having been satisfied to mention the eminent General Poe, and respectfully refer to the legend of Admiral McBride. Certain phases of Poe's life and ancestry are unduly dwelled upon by both Harrison and other of the earlier biographers. It is not an essential matter to the understanding of Poe to know whether his ancestors were "Normans, who came over with William, the Conqueror," or came from Scandinavia; whether the name was originally spelled de la Poer, de la Poe, le Poer, Power, or Poë; whether they "happened" in Ireland because "Sir Roger Le Poer went to Ireland, as marshal to Prince John, in the reign of Henry II"; nor yet does the fact that in Poe's veins flowed the blood of "James McBride, Admiral of the Blue," in any way explain Poe's heritage of genius.

Nothing definite is known of the ancestry of Mrs. Poe. Apparently she contributed her full share to the personal characteristics and mental qualities of her son. As far as the father is concerned, the little we know about him does not justify our tracing any of the son's genius, or those good qualities we know Edgar Poe possessed, to the paternal parent. Yet, for some reason the paternal branch of the family has been widely and fantastically exploited.

Nor can Ingram's insinuation: "he [Poe] was in some way related to his godfather, who had, therefore, every cause to compassionate the little orphan's condition," based on no documentary or other authoritative evidence,

be true; for the "bottle" derivation, as an inherited incubus, is too evident.

Griswold must be held responsible for yet another offense against the name of Poe. He was the first biographer to append the full name "Allan" as a part of the Poe signature. This custom may be in accordance with the American fashion of so designating all who have attained distinction, whether by self-adoption or by their contemporaries acclamation. At no time and under no circumstances did Poe sign his name other than "Edgar A. Poe," except on a single formal occasion, nor was he so addressed by any of his associates. Willis, Lowell, Graham, Mrs. Whitman and other of his contemporaries did not so designate him. Neither by reason of adoption, or of treatment received at the hands of the Allan family during his life and since his death, is it justifiable to associate this name with that of Poe.

Another matter that deserves reprehension is the attitude to Poe held by many publishers, both regarding the illustrations used to reproduce his conceptions, and especially as to the pictures they insert of Poe.

Usually Poe is represented with glassy, staring eyes as if he were hallucinating some horrible vision conjured up by his disordered brain: with his trembling frame surmounted either by a raven or a black cat he cowers in some grotesque attitude gripped by horrible fear; or, as in the picture etched by the Frenchman, Manet, now a popular reproduction of Poe's characteristic features, he is caricatured emerging from a fit of delirium with hollow cheeks, uprolled eyes, and fatuous, trembling lips, muttering some senseless gibberish or whispering to some unseen demon—possibly visualizing Lauvriere's description: "a Poe prematurely aged and debilitated, whose haggard countenance is stamped by the imminence of insanity."

The portrait of Poe, which serves as a frontispiece, is indicative of a face matured by thought and sobered by the struggles and the unhappy contact with that abnormal phase of life which was the ill-fortune of Poe. As such I have selected it as an ideal representation of the man, neither grotesquely caricatured nor unduly idealized.

Sartain, as an artist, could speak with authority as to Poe's facial characteristics, and his pronouncement bears out the judgment of other associates and friends:

> Poe's face was handsome. Although his forehead when seen in profile showed a receding line from the brow up, viewed from the front it presented a broad and noble expanse, very large at and above the temples. His lips were thin and very delicately modelled.

I am not the first one to protest these "horrors" as representing the actual features of Poe. Among his good friends in Philadelphia probably the one he was most intimate with was Thomas Cottrell Clarke, proprietor of the "Saturday Evening Post," who not only employed Poe on his own publications but associated himself with Poe in the proposed issue of the "Stylus." He makes the following comment:

> During his engagement in my office I published a life of Mr. Poe, with a portrait from a daguerreotype. Both the life and the portrait are utterly unlike the gross caricatures manufactured since his death; . . . the portrait prefixed to a recent volume of Poe's poems bears no resemblance to the fine intellectual head of Poe. Why are such wrongs perpetuated upon the dead? why are they permitted?

The Poe reproduction prefacing this section is from a miniature that was in the possession of Rosalie Poe. As such it is probably as correct a likeness as now exists.

The grotesque and repulsive characterization of many of Poe's conceptions such as Berenice, Ligeia and Eleanora, that certain artists adopt when they attempt to illustrate Poe's tales and Poems, are strongly reminiscent

of that "quagmire phosphorescence" through which certain commentators have envisaged some of Poe's finest work, and which they have denominated "Germanic Horrors." Poe's own explanation of these "horrors" has never received due consideration: "If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany but of the soul—that I have deduced this terror only from its legitimate sources, and urged it only to its legitimate results."

TO MY MOTHER.

Because I feel that, in the Heavens above,
The angels, whispering to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,
None so devotional as that of "Mother,"
Therefore by that dear name I long have called you—
You who are more than mother unto me,
And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you
In setting my Virginia's spirit free.
My mother—my own mother, who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you
Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.

Section III. Poe's Friend.

I can not close this study without some reference to Poe, the man. I, too, should have wished to write his name in capitals. No figure in all literary history has appealed more strongly to me by reason of his misunderstood personality and because of malignant representation.

Unfortunately, it happens that this monograph deals only with the darker side of Poe's life. I have thus far related only what occurred during periods of irresponsibility. I have not attempted to give an account of his life further than this requirement demanded.

Poe was essentially domestic. He took pleasure only in his small family circle and, in the hour in which he was overcome by his evil inheritance, it was his harbor of refuge. The real love of his life was given to Mrs. Clemm, his "Dear Muddy." She was the mother of the wife whom he cherished and nursed, and she is the mother-figure that so heroically stands forth as the defender of his home and the preserver of his very life—the hard-working, devoted and ever faithful mother. Our earliest record shows that Poe had an intense longing for this mother-love. Apparently he found in Mrs. Clemm all the consideration and consolation for which he longed, and of which the untimely death of his own mother had deprived him; a love that was an absolute necessity for one of his abnormal psychology.

Her lineaments show a face characterized by gentleness and placidity, yet remarkable for nobility of outline. Her eyes appear penetratingly gentle and kind; her letters bespeak much mental strength and womanly tenderness, while her whole life was one of such devotion to her two

sick and doomed children as to justify the tributes that her own friends, as well as all of Poe's biographers, paid her.

Willis says:

Winter after winter, for years, the most touching sight to us, in this whole city, has been that tireless minister to genius, thinly and insufficiently clad, going from office to office, with a poem, or an article, on some literary subject, to sell—sometimes simply pleading in a broken voice that he was ill, and begging for him—mentioning nothing but 'that he was ill,' whatever might be the reason for his writing nothing; and never, amid all her tears and recitals of distress suffering one syllable to escape her lips that could convey a doubt of him, or a complaint, or a lessening of pride in his genius and good intentions. Her daughter died, a year and a half since, but she did not desert him. She continued his ministering angel,—living with him, caring for him, guarding him against exposure, and, when he was carried away by temptation, amid grief and the loneliness of feeling unreplied to, and awoke from his self-abandonment prostrated in destitution and suffering, *begging* for him still.

If woman's devotion, born with a first love, and fed with human passion, hallow its object, as it is allowed to do, what does not a devotion like this—pure, disinterested, and holy as the watch of an invisible spirit—say for him who inspired it?

Mrs. Clemm, in a letter written to Mrs. Whitman just after Poe's departure from Fordham, on his last trip to Richmond, throws further light on the relations existing between them:

Eddy has been gone ten days, and I have not heard one word from him. Do you wonder that I *am distracted?* I fear everything. . . . Oh, if any evil has befallen *him*, what can comfort me? The day after he left New York, I left Mrs. Lewis and started for home. I called on a rich friend who had made many promises, but never knew our situation. I frankly told her. She proposed to me to leave Eddy, saying he might very well do for himself. . . . Any one to propose to *me* to leave my Eddy—what a cruel insult! No one to console and comfort him but me; no one to nurse him and take care of him when he is sick and helpless! Can I ever forget that dear sweet face, so tranquil, so pale, and those dear eyes looking at me so sadly, while she said, 'Darling, Muddy, you will console and take care of my poor Eddy—you will never, *never* leave him? Promise me, my dear Muddy, and then I can

die in peace.' And *I did promise*. And when I meet her in heaven, I can say, 'I have kept my promise, my darling.'

Surely she did keep it, and wherever Aidenn may be, there will these three be found—together.

For this sacrificing and faithful woman all who knew her had only words of love and praise—save only one, the Preacher, who wrote to Mrs. Whitman:

> I cannot refrain from begging you to be very careful what you say or write to Mrs. Clemm, who is not your friend, nor anybody's friend, and who has no element of goodness or kindness in her nature, but whose heart and understanding are full of malice and wickedness. I confide in you these sentences for your own sake only, for Mrs. C. appears to be a very warm friend to me. Pray destroy this note, and at least act cautiously, till I may justify it in a conversation with you.
>
> I am yours very sincerely,
>
> Rufus W. Griswold.

At one time she had extorted admiration even from Griswold, who paid her this tribute:

> When once he sent for me to visit him, during a period of illness caused by protracted and anxious watching at the side of his sick wife, I was impressed by the singular neatness and the air of refinement in his home. It was in a small house, in one of the pleasant and silent neighborhoods far from the center of the town, and though slightly and cheaply furnished everything in it was so tasteful and so fitly disposed that it seemed altogether suitable for a man of genius. For this and for most of the comforts he enjoyed, in his brightest as in his darkest years, he was chiefly indebted to his mother-in-law, who loved him with the more than maternal devotion and constancy.

In the end, a man will be judged by his home relations and his everyday home life, rather than by the armor in which he encases himself for the fight in his "Battle of Life." It occasionally happens that the polished exterior that we present to the world and the immaculate habiliments in which we exhibit ourselves conceal a gnawing cancer which destroys the very vitals and uproots all family happiness. In his solitary life Poe apparently shut out

the world from his fireside, yet we have the testimony of occasional visitors as to the charm of his home life:

On this occasion I was introduced to the young wife of the poet, and to the mother, then more than sixty years of age. She was a tall, dignified old lady, with most ladylike manners, and her black dress, though old and much worn, looked really elegant on her. She wore a widow's cap, of the genuine pattern, and it suited exquisitely with her snow-white hair. Her features were large, and corresponded with her stature, and it seemed strange how such a stalwart and queenly woman could be the mother of her *petite* daughter. Mrs. Poe looked very young; she had large black eyes, and a pearly whiteness of skin which was a perfect pallor. Her pale face, her brilliant eyes, and her raven hair gave her an unearthly look. One felt that she was almost a disrobed spirit, and when she coughed it was made certain that she was passing away. The mother seemed hale and strong, and appeared to be almost a sort of universal Providence to her strange children.

The cottage had an air of gentility and taste that must have been lent it by the presence of its inmates. So neat, so poor, so unfurnished and yet so charming a dwelling I never saw. The floor of the kitchen was white as wheaten flour. A table, a chair, and a little stove that it contained seemed to furnish it completely. The sitting-room floor was laid with check matting; four chairs, a light stand, and a hanging book shelf completed the furniture. There were pretty presentation copies of books on the little shelves, and the Brownings had posts of honor on the stand. With quiet exultation Poe drew from his side-pocket a letter he had recently received from Elizabeth Barret Browning. He read it to us.

Again Mrs. Clemm writes:

I always sat up with him when he was writing, and gave him a cup of hot coffee every hour or two. At home he was simple and affectionate as a child, and during all the years he lived with me I do not remember a single night that he failed to come and kiss his 'Mother,' before going to bed.

Willis thus judges him in the memoir he published in the first volume of Poe's works:

Some four or five years since, when editing a daily paper in this City, Mr. Poe was employed by us, for several months, as critic and sub-editor. This was our first personal acquaintance with him. He

resided with his wife and mother at Fordham, a few miles out of town, but was at his desk in the office, from nine in the morning till the evening paper went to press. With the highest admiration for his genius, and a willingness to let it atone for more than ordinary irregularity, we were led by common report to expect a very capricious attention to his duties, and occasionally a scene of violence and difficulty. Time went on, however, and he was invariably punctual and industrious. With his pale, beautiful and intellectual face, as a reminder of what genius was in him, it was impossible, of course, not to treat him always with deferential courtesy, and, to our occasional request that he would not probe too deep into a criticism, or that he would erase a passage colored too highly with his resentments against society or mankind, he readily and courteously assented—far more yielding than most men, we thought, on points so excusably sensitive.

With the prospect of taking the lead in another periodical, he, at last, voluntarily gave up his employment with us, and, through all this considerable period, we had seen none but one presentment of the man—a quiet, patient, industrious, and most gentlemanly person, commanding the utmost respect and good feeling by his unvarying deportment and ability.

Woodberry quotes Willis as to his association with Poe:

He frequently called on us afterwards at our place of business, and we met him often in the street,—invariably the same sad-mannered, winning, and refined gentleman such as we had always known him, and found in his business letters—friendly notes—sufficient evidence of the very qualities denied to Mr. Poe,—humility, willingness to persevere, belief in another's kindness, and capability of cordial and grateful friendship! Such he assuredly was when *sane*. Such only he has invariably seemed to us, in all we personally know of him, through a friendship of five or six years. And so much easier is it to believe what we have seen and known, than what we *hear of* only, that we remember him but with admiration and respect.

Another associate, even more competent to judge Poe, was Graham. He thus relates his own experience:

I shall never forget how solicitous of the happiness of his wife and mother-in-law he was whilst one of the editors of 'Graham's Magazine'; his whole effort seemed to be to procure the comfort and welfare of his home. Except for their happiness, and the natural ambition of having a magazine of his own, I never heard him deplore the want of

wealth. The truth is, he cared little for money, and knew less of its value, for he seemed to have no personal expenses. What he received from me, in regular monthly installments, went directly into the hands of his mother-in-law for family comforts, and *twice* only I remember his purchasing some rather expensive luxuries for his house, and then he was nervous to the degree of misery until he had, by extra articles, covered what he considered an imprudent indebtedness. His love for his wife was a sort of rapturous worship of the spirit of beauty which he felt was fading before his eyes. I have seen him hovering around her when she was ill, with all the fond fear and the tender anxiety of a mother for her first-born, her slightest cough causing in him a shudder, a heart-chill that was visible. I rode out, one summer evening with them, and the remembrance of his watchful eyes eagerly bent on the slightest change of hue in that loved face haunts me yet as the memory of a sad strain. It was the hourly *anticipation* of her loss that made him a sad and thoughtful man, and lent a mournful melody to his undying song.

There was a well-known "bibliopole" who was a fellow guest with Poe for several months during his first residence in New York. His name was Gowans, noted for his acquisitive book collecting—a "Ballinger" who bought but never sold.

Harrison quotes him as follows:

For eight months or more 'one house contained us, as one table fed.' During this time I saw much of him and had an opportunity of conversing with him often, and I must say that I never saw him the least affected by liquor, nor even descend to any known vice, while he was one of the most courteous, gentlemanly and intelligent companions I have met with during my journeyings and haltings through divers divisions of the globe.

Captain Mayne Reid is another writer who came to the defense of Poe. In "Onward" for April, 1869, appeared his article: "A Dead Man Defended," and he thus describes the intimate family life of the Poes:

Poe I have known for a whole month closeted in his house all the time hard at work with his pen, poorly paid, and hard driven to keep the wolf from his slightly fastened door; intruded on only by a few select friends, who always found him, what they

knew him to be, a generous host, an affectionate son-in-law and husband,—in short a respectable gentleman. . . . In the list of literary men there has been no such spiteful biographer as Rufus Griswold, and never such a victim of posthumous spite as poor Edgar Poe. . . . [Mrs. Poe was] a lady angelically beautiful in person, and not less beautiful in spirit. No one who remembers that dark-eyed, dark-haired daughter of Virginia,—her own name,—her grace, her facial beauty, her demeanor so modest as to be remarkable; no one who has ever spent an hour in her company, but will endorse what I have said. I remember how we, the friends of the poet, used to talk of her high qualities, and when we talked of her beauty, I well knew that the rose-tint upon her cheek was too bright, too pure, to be of the earth. . . . Besides the poet and his interesting wife, there was another dweller. It (*sic*) was a woman of middle age and almost masculine aspect. She had the size and figure of a man, with a countenance that, at first sight, seemed scarce feminine. A stranger would have been incredulous, surprised, as I was, when introduced to her as the mother of that angelic creature who had accepted Edgar Poe as the partner of her life. She was the ever vigilant guardian of the house, watching it against the ever silent but continuous sap of necessity, that appeared every day to be approaching closer and nearer. She was the sole servant, keeping everything clean; the sole messenger, doing the errands, making pilgrimages between the poet and the publishers, frequently bringing back such chilling responses as 'the article not accepted' or 'the cheque not to be given until such and such a date'—often too late for his necessities.

In the "Hearth and Home" for 1870, Amanda B. Harris, a friend of the Poe family, wrote:

It was one of the saddest things in his sad history that the two dearest to him were sharers of his hardships and sufferings—his beautiful young wife and her devoted mother. He married his cousin, who was brought up in the South, and was as unused to toil as she was unfit for it. She hardly looked more than fourteen, fair, soft, graceful and girlish. Every one who saw her was won by her. Poe was very proud and very fond of her, and used to delight in the round, childlike face and plump little figure, which he contrasted with himself, so thin and half melancholy looking, and

she in turn idolized him. She had a voice of wonderful sweetness, and was an exquisite singer, and in their more prosperous days, when they were living in a pretty rose-covered cottage on the outskirts of Philadelphia, she had her harp and piano. . . . It was during this time that Mrs. Poe, while singing one evening, ruptured a blood-vessel and after that she suffered a hundred deaths. She could not bear the slightest exposure, and needed the utmost care; and all those conveniences as to apartment and surroundings which are so important in the case of an invalid, were almost matters of life and death to her. And yet the room where she lay for weeks, hardly able to breathe, except as she was fanned, was a little place with the ceiling so low over the narrow bed that her head almost touched it. But no one dared to speak, Mr. Poe was so sensitive and irritable; 'quick as steel and flint,' said one who knew him in those days. And he would not allow a word about the danger of her dying, the mention of it drove him wild. . . . So they lived, bound together in tender bonds of love and sorrow,—their love making their lot more tolerable—the three clinging to each other; and the mother was the good angel who strove to shield the poet and to save him. This way their lives went on in those dark days; he trying desperately at times to earn money, writing a little, and fitfully fighting against himself, sustained only by their solace and sympathy, and by the helping hand of the self-sacrificing mother, who loved him as if he had been, indeed, her own son.

Mr. S. D. Lewis, a New York lawyer, the husband of Sarah Ann Lewis, gave the following testimony:

And now, as to Mr. Poe, he was one of the most affectionate, kind-hearted men I ever knew. I never witnessed so much tender affection and devoted love as existed in that family of three persons.

His dear Virginia, after her death, was his 'Lost Lenore.' I have spent weeks in the closest intimacy with Mr. Poe, and I never saw him drink a drop of liquor, wine or beer, in my life, and never saw him under the slightest influence of any stimulants whatever. He was, in truth, a most abstemious and exemplary man. But I learned from Mrs. Clemm that if, on the importunity of a convivial friend, he took a single glass, even wine, it suddenly flashed through his nervous system and excitable brain, and that

he was no longer himself, or responsible for his acts. His biographers have not done his virtues or his genius justice; and to produce a startling effect, by contrast, have magnified his errors and attributed to him faults which he never had. He was always, in my presence, the polished gentleman, the profound scholar, the true critic, and the inspired oracular poet; dreaming and spiritual; lofty but sad.

Mrs. Clemm bears the following testimony:

Eddie was domestic in all his habits, seldom leaving home for an hour unless his darling Virginia, or myself, were with him. He was truly an affectionate, kind husband, and a devoted son to me. He was impulsive, generous, affectionate, and *noble*. His tastes were very simple, and his admiration for all that was good and beautiful was very great. We three lived for each other.

And yet Griswold, in the preface to Poe's collected works wrote:

There seemed to him no moral susceptibility; and, what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little or nothing of the true point of honor. He had, to a morbid excess, that desire to rise which is vulgarly called ambition, but no wish for the esteem or the love of his species; only the hard wish to succeed—not shine, not serve—succeed, that he might have the right to despise the world which galled his self-conceit.

We have, finally, Poe's own estimate of himself, written to Mrs. Whitman.

With the exception of occasional follies and excesses which I bitterly lament but to which I have been driven by intolerable sorrow, and which are hourly committed by others without attracting any notice whatever—I can call to mind no act of my life which would bring a blush to my cheeks—or to yours.

Poe was a Solitary. Apparently there was no one, outside his family group, with whom at any time he became intimate. In some of his letters he seemd to long for friendship and, especially in one that he wrote to Lowell, he expressed himself with unusual freedom, and without that veil of mental reserve through which he allowed the world to view and misjudge him:

I can feel for the 'constitutional indolence' of which you complain —for it is one of my own besetting sins. I am excessively slothful and wonderfully industrious—by fits. There are epochs when any kind of mental exertion is torture and when nothing yields me pleasure but solitary communion 'with the mountains and the woods'—the 'altars' of Byron. I have thus rambled and dreamed away whole months, and awake, at last, to a sort of mania of composition.

I am not ambitious, except negatively. I now and then feel stirred up to excel a fool, merely because I hate to let a fool imagine he can excel me.

I live continually in a reverie of the future; I have no faith in human perfectability.

I think that human exertion will have no appreciable effect on humanity. Man is now only more active—not more happy—not more wise, than he was 6000 years ago. . . . You speak of 'an estimate of my life,' and from what I have already said, you will see that I have none to give.

I have been too conscious of the mutability and evanescence of temporal things to give any continuous effort to anything—to be consistent in anything.

My life has been a whim—an impulse—a passion—a longing for solitude—a scorn of all things present in an earnest desire for the future.

I am profoundly excited by music and by some poems—those of Tennyson especially—whom with Keats, Shelley, Coleridge occasionally, and a few others of like thought and expression, I regard as the sole poets.

Poe's was a royal mentality, and we may be sure that he fully realized that he was without a peer among those with whom he associated. Who else would dare write: "Mr. Bryant is not *all* fool. Mr. Willis is not *quite* an ass. Mr. Longfellow *will* steal, but, perhaps he cannot help it, and it must not be denied that *nil tetegit quod non ornavit.*"

To him who wears the crown, possibly such language is permissible. Yet it is unfortunate that Poe's life could not have been enriched by a few of those literary friendships that have so glorified the lives of such men as Johnson, Thackeray, Goldsmith and Lamb.

There was one to whom he warmed and, under more propitious circumstances, there might have ripened such mutual appreciation as to have indissolubly linked their names—no matter how wide the literary gap that separated them.

Although Poe's letters to Lowell are marked by an unusual and personal note of cordial friendship, and Lowell apparently reciprocated, they never met except on the one unfortunate occasion, the circumstances of which were such as to cause a serious and permanent alienation. Yet their correspondence seemed to justify the olive branch Poe held out:

> I hope ere long to have the pleasure of conversing with you personally. There is no man living with whom I have so much desire to become acquainted. How much I would like to interchange opinions with you on poems and poets in general! I fancy that we should agree, usually, in results, while differing frequently about principles. The day may come when we can discuss everything at leisure and in person.

There is every reason to believe that, had Lowell reciprocated, a great literary friendship might have resulted, in spite of the fact that the two men differed as greatly in their literary capacities as they did in their material fortunes.

Who of the present generation would have connected the name of Poe the maligned—the man whose name became a synonym for all that is held to be repulsive, who "succeeded in attracting and combining in his own person all the floating vices which genius had hitherto shown itself capable of grasping in its widest and most eccentric orbit"; "a man who became an object of charity"; "the delirious drunken pauper of a common hospital"; whose memory and name became a byword; in whose own works there was embedded by his unmoral biographer the story of a "career full of instruction and warning, as it has always been made a portion of the penalty of wrong that

its anatomy should be displayed for the common study and advantage"; pilloried in his life and crucified in his death—with that of Lowell the Ambassador, the Professor of belles-lettres, the literary arbiter of the late nineteenth century.

Poe's name will live in spite of his critics and of evil reports. He has left works that neither time nor age nor changing fashions nor new standards can cast into oblivion. They will constitute a "monument more lasting than brass," and with Horace he can sing:

Quod si me lyricis vatibus inseris
Sublimi feriam sidere vertice

for their dreams have been realized and they "have reached the stars with the high-carried head."

None can begrudge Lowell his niche in the temple of fame. Although in the coming years but few will listen to his "Conversations on Some of the Old Poets," or look with him through his "Study Windows," or accompany him on his "Fireside Travels," yet shall he have the satisfaction of knowing that, so far as this world and its judgments are concerned, his reputation remains untarnished; and that no word of scandal ever has been uttered which could in the slightest besmirch his good name.

It is equally certain, although for some good New England reason Lowell assumed the throne left vacant by the death of Longfellow, that generations to come will know him not; and that his name, good or bad, will perish from the memory of man, unless it be recalled as a contributor to the curiosities of literature, when the "Biglow Papers" are referred to, or "A Fable for Critics" is mentioned because it contains an allusion to Poe.

Lowell's name may be carried to future generations because he almost became Poe's friend.

Did one pay the price because he was the child of genius,

while the other inherited the earth because he lacked this divine gift? Who rightly may be judged the more fortunate? For of the mediocre who strive, struggle, die and are forgotten, the world holds no record.

Our beloved Autocrat, more wonderfully than I know of elsewhere, has described this "Race of Life."

> Commencement day always reminds me of the start for the 'Derby' when the beautiful three-year olds of the season are brought up for the trial. . . . But this is the start and here they are, coats bright as silk, and manes smooth as *eau lustrale* can make them. Some of the best are pranced around, a few minutes each, to show their paces. . . . Do they really think those little thin legs can do anything in such a slashing sweepstakes as is coming off in the next forty years? Oh, this terrible gift of second-sight that comes to some of us when we begin to look through the silvered rings of the *arcus senilis! Ten years gone.* First turn in the race. A few broken down; two or three bolted. *Cassock,* a black colt, seems to be ahead of the rest; those black colts commonly get the start, I have noticed, of the others in the first quarter. *Meteor* has pulled up.
>
> *Twenty years. Cassock* has dropped from the front, and *Judex,* an iron-gray, has the lead. But look! how they have thinned out. Down flat,—five,—six, how many? They lie still enough! They will not get up again in this race, be very sure!
>
> *Thirty years. Dives,* bright sorrel, ridden by the fellow in the yellow jacket, begins to make play fast. But who is that other one that has been lengthening his stride and now shows close up to the front? Don't you remember the quiet brown colt *Asteroid* with the star in his forehead? The black colt, as we used to call him, is in the background taking it easily in a gentle trot.
>
> *Forty years.* More dropping off but much as before.
>
> *Fifty years.* Race over. All that are on the course are coming in at a walk; no more running. Who is ahead? What! and the winning post a slab of white or gray stone standing out from that turf where there is no more jockying or straining for victory.

Although Poe is now recognized as our literary primate, he has been denied official recognition; moreover he has been reluctantly admitted to our metropolitan Hall of Fame, and those who should have gloried in the great

literary reputation he has given to us, and who should have welcomed him as a peer, coldly declined to participate when they were asked to do him honor.

Boston, with its New England clientele, never bowed the knee. To them it seemed incomprehensible that one could have arisen who did not belong to their local cult, strangely ignoring the fact that in spite of their ostracism Poe really was Boston born. Woodberry had reason to congratulate himself on his liberality of spirit in recognizing a "literary life led outside New England."

Years ago the acid test was applied. When, through the efforts of old friends and of the school children of Baltimore, a public subscription was raised for the purpose of erecting a "slab of stone" to fittingly mark the resting-place of Poe's body—there he is not—they asked those great men of Boston who had been Poe's contemporaries, and who necessarily recognized his literary eminence, to join in commemorating his memory. These invitations were either ignored or declined.

Lowell, Poe's old friend and admirer, in a four-line letter, "regretted very much that it will be quite impossible for me to be present." Bryant, in a note equally brief, returned "thanks for the obliging invitation." Mr. Whittier: "As a matter of principle, I do not favor ostentatious monuments" (only a few hundred dollars had been raised by these poor children of Baltimore). Dr. Holmes, in his letter of declination, feelingly referred to Poe's sins of commission: "The hearts of all who reverence the inspiration of genius, who can look tenderly upon the infirmities too often attending it, who can feel for its misfortunes, will sympathize with you, as you gather around the resting place of all that was mortal of Edgar Allan Poe." If Holmes, usually so generous and warm-hearted, could thus coldly respond, to whom could we then turn? Surely there was one who would exhibit some tenderness for the memory of a

contemporary he most certainly admired, however widely apart their orbits ranged. But Longfellow's response was the briefest of all; no kindly memory nor literary appreciation roused the slightest spark of his sympathy. To him these two lines:

> The fever called living
> Is conquered at last.

seemed the fitting Epitaph and End.

And Tennyson, the Tennyson Poe so admired,—would that I did not have to record it!—wrote:

> I have long been acquainted with Poe's works and am an admirer of them. I am obliged to you for your expressions about myself, and your promise of sending me the design for the poet's monument, and beg you to believe me, yours very truly.

None of these, by the slightest word or token, gave evidence of sympathetic interest or of respect for the memory of Poe: not one of them went beyond the limit of strict etiquette in their formal answers.

This indifference cannot be accounted for by sectional jealousies or by local prejudices. Many years before our country again had become one; the ties binding it had grown into indissoluble bonds that have made us forget there ever was a line of cleavage. Holmes once used and explained the word "polarized" in a way to account for this attitude.

Continuity of contemptuous memory and biography had overcome and "polarized" all feeling for the human side of Poe, and had obliterated all thought of him, except the one that was bitter and that bore no relation to his genius. Coming generations will become de-polarized.

Had it been Lowell, and not Poe, whose name was to have been celebrated by a fitting observance of his memorable qualities,—not of the things he wrote,—what an outpouring of commemorative odes would have honored alike the subject and the singers!

I do not believe that I am peculiar in the great love that I hold for the names of certain writers—not necessarily because they wrote marvelous things, but because they are men who appeal to my heart.

It was Thackeray who said:

> If Steele is not our friend he is nothing. He is by no means the most brilliant of wits or the deepest of thinkers, but he is our friend; we love him as children love, with an A because he is amiable. I own to liking Dick Steele the Man and Dick Steele the Author much better than much better men and much better authors.

How I would have loved to go a-fishing with old Isaac, and have had him show me "that very chub with a white spot on his tail." What a feast I could have had at the Mitre, not because of Johnson's turgid argumentations "for effect," but rejoicing in Goldsmith's whimsicalities and stuttered paradoxes; and the touch of his honest hand would have thrilled me in spite of his absurd "bloom-colored coat" and his homely snub-nosed face seared by the scars of smallpox.

Or could I have met, only one time, the big-hearted Thackeray in one of his hours of relaxation, possibly on one of his occasional meetings with "Old Fitz," indulging in persiflage and uproarious boyish laughter—Thackeray, the lovable, who never stooped to, nor tolerated, an ignoble action, and who satirized all that was false, mean, and dishonest; that poor Thackeray who so patiently bore the one great and unbearable affliction in his attempt to mother his motherless girls.

Would not one have enjoyed a day at Silverado with Louis Stevenson, that patient sufferer who so pathetically and tenaciously fought for life—not because he feared death, but because life held much joy? We cannot even look at the crags of Mount Saint Helena, which for a time held and finally restored him, without a quickening of the pulse-beat and a tightening of the heart-strings.

Among such "Royal and Noble Authors" as these, Poe would not have been the least of those I loved. In his hours of sorrow and depression, when he shunned the world and sought seclusion in the little cottage at Fordham, now a shrine to his memory, I could have kept him silent company, and in my own poor way have ministered to his necessities—possibly have given him aid in his affliction; or I would have accompanied him on one of his solitary rambles to High Bridge, bearing with him his load of gloom and wretchedness. When his mood changed and inspiration lighted his mobile face, I would have rejoiced in his low-toned voice repeating some favorite poem; or when supernatural themes employed his facile tongue, I would have sympathized with him while he dwelled on those wonders of nature that so completely occupied his later years; and, in the words of his beloved Tennyson, I would have attempted with him to seek some solution of the Ultimate,

> And reach the law within the law.

A MONOLOGUE CONCERNING THE DEAD

THE CONVERSATION OF EIROS AND CHARMION.

BY EDGAR A. POE.

EIROS. Why do you call me Eiros?

CHARMION. So henceforward will you always be called. You must forget, too, *my* earthly name, and speak to me as Charmion.

EIROS. This is indeed no dream!

CHARMION. Dreams are with us no more—but of these mysteries anon. I rejoice to see you looking life-like and rational. The film of the shadow has already passed from off your eyes. Be of heart, and fear nothing. Your allotted days of stupor have expired; and, to-morrow, I will myself induct you into the full joys and wonders of your novel existence.

EIROS. True—I feel no stupor—none at all. The wild sickness and the terrible darkness have left me, and I hear no longer that mad, rushing, horrible sound, like the "voice of many waters." Yet my senses are bewildered, Charmion, with the keenness of their perception of *the new*.

CHARMION. A few days will remove all this—but I fully understand you, and feel for you. It is now ten earthly years since I underwent what you undergo—yet the remembrance of it hangs by me still. You have now suffered all of pain, however, which you will suffer in Aidenn.

EIROS. In Aidenn?

CHARMION. In Aidenn.

EIROS. Oh God!—pity me, Charmion!—I am overburthened with the majesty of all things—of the unknown now known—of the speculative Future merged in the august and certain Present.

CHARMION. Grapple not now with such thoughts. To-morrow we will speak of this. Your mind wavers, and its agitation will find relief in the exercise of simple memories. Look not around, nor forward—but back. I am burning with anxiety to hear the details of that stupendous event which threw you among us. Tell me of it. Let us converse of familiar things, in the old familiar language of the world which has so fearfully perished.

EIROS. Most fearfully, fearfully!—this is indeed no dream.

CHARMION. Dreams are no more. Was I much mourned, my Eiros?

EIROS. Mourned, Charmion?—oh deeply. To that last hour of all there hung a cloud of intense gloom and devout sorrow over your household.

CHARMION. And that last hour—speak of it. Remember that, beyond the naked fact of the catastrophe itself, I know nothing. When, coming out from among mankind, I passed into Night through the Grave—at that period, if I remember aright, the calamity which overwhelmed you was utterly unanticipated. But, indeed, I knew little of the speculative philosophy of the day.

EIROS. The individual calamity was, as you say, entirely unanticipated; but analogous misfortunes had been long a subject of discussion with astronomers. I need scarce tell you, my friend, that, even when you left us, men had agreed to understand those passages in the most holy writings which speak of the final destruction of all things by fire, as having reference to the orb of the earth alone. But in regard to the immediate agency of the ruin, speculation had been at fault from that epoch in astronomical knowledge in which the comets were divested of the terrors of flame. The very moderate density of these bodies had been well established. They had been observed to pass among the satellites of Jupiter, without bringing about any sensible alteration either in the masses or in the orbits of these secondary planets. We had long regarded the wanderers as vapory creations of inconceivable tenuity, and as altogether incapable of doing injury to our substantial globe, even in the event of contact. But contact was not in any degree dreaded; for the elements of all the comets were accurately known. That among *them* we should look for the agency of the threatened fiery destruction had been for many years considered an inadmissible idea. But wonders and wild fancies had been, of late days, strangely rife among mankind; and, although it was only with a few of the ignorant that actual apprehension prevailed upon the announcement by astronomers of a *new* comet, yet this announcement was generally received with I know not what of agitation and mistrust.

The elements of the strange orb were immediately calculated, and it was at once conceded by all observers that its path, at perihelion, would bring it into very close proximity with the earth. There were two or three astronomers, and these of secondary note, who resolutely maintained that a contact was inevitable. I cannot very well express to you the effect of this intelligence upon the people. For a few short days they would not believe an assertion which their intellect, so long employed

A MONOLOGUE CONCERNING THE DEAD

He was at all times a dreamer—dwelling in ideal realms—in heaven or hell—peopled with the creatures and accidents of his brain. He walked the streets, in madness or melancholy, with lips moving in indistinct curses, or with eyes upturned in passionate prayer, (never for himself, for he felt, or professed to feel, that he was really damned,) but for their happiness who at the moment were objects of his idolatry;—or, with his glances introverted to a heart gnawed with anguish, and with a face shrouded in gloom, he would brave the wildest storms; and all night, with drenched garments and arms beating the winds and rains, would speak as if to spirits that at such times only could be evoked by him from the Aidenn, close by whose portals his disturbed soul sought to forget the ills to which his constitution subjected him—close by the Aidenn where were those he loved—the Aidenn which he might never see, but in fitful glimpses as its gates opened to receive the less fiery and more happy natures whose destiny to sin did not involve the doom of death.

(*Extract from Griswold's Memoir of Poe published in the third volume of his edition of Poe's Works.*)

Charmion Converses with Eiros:

These are the Heights set apart for those Great of Soul and World-Worn. Here, they dwell in Eternal Rest. In the World from which they came they carried heavy burdens and, despite the glorious names that they won, unbelievable misfortunes attended them. The pinions which, extended, bore them so bravely, folded, proved unwieldy and burdensome. The barbs pointing their wing-feathers irritated; at times they excoriated those with whom they were brought most closely in contact. Only on those rare occasions when spreading their wings they could soar, surmounting all earthly obstacles, did they find the going pleasant and the way delightful. The obstructions were many and the weight of their folded wings proved a handicap in the Race of Life.

The Highways that they were compelled to travel were rough, obstructed by wrecks, soiled with muck, and they mud-bespattered those who ran overswiftly. For this reason certain of the Elect refused to travel these Highways and sought the Byways.

All who believed that they had won entrance to Aidenn did not gain admission. These Heights are possessed of a tenuous and intoxicating ozone that may sustain only those who by an especial inheritance were created to breathe this atmosphere.

Changing standards of succeeding Ages unaccountably govern the degree of adulation paid to these Dwellers. Many of our Guests do not even recognize that Aged Man—bald, wrinkled and blind, although conspicuous by reason of the strange garments that he wears. His diaphanous robe renders him so indistinct that he has been regarded as a Myth, and his corporeal existence has been denied.

At one time He, with that small band of Ancients with whom he alone associates, dominated the World of Letters. It is said that the Epics relating the misfortunes and valorous deeds of those Trojan Heroes that they sang, filled the World with Melody. These judgments have not been sustained and Posterity is fast forgetting their existence. It is evident that few recognize or can converse with them and they have been relegated to the inaccessible Heights.

Do you see that One standing apart, whom all who pass so profoundly salute? Apparently such homage amazes him, for he remembers that while he lived on Earth he received scant recognition. His contemporaries failed to appreciate his marvelous performance and refused him recognition as their Primate. They regarded him as an interloper who made undue use of their own conceptions;—"an upstart crow beautified with our feathers," but so care-

less was he of their carping criticisms that he ignored their sneers and pressed on to his work unconscious of their existence. He does recall that he collected appealing phrases and happy expressions culled from many sources, and that he wove these into fabrics that fitted his fellow mummers, which sufficed for their occasional demands; but the World did not applaud. It was no desire for personal reputation or immortal fame that caused him to labor at this Work. The necessities of his Co-workers rather than any inclination of his own induced him to select Ancient Legends and Historical Chronicles and to dress them in the figments of his imagination, picturing them so vividly that they seemed endowed with life. So slight was the labor that gave birth to these dream-children, and so spontaneous was their creation that he failed to appreciate their immortality. So unconsciously and unpremeditatedly did they well forth that he did not recognize the melody of their flow, nor did he realize that he had discovered the Fountain at which succeeding generations would slake their intellectual thirst. He sang as the mocking-bird sings, repeating all, harmonious and beautiful, that he heard, and in the crucible of his brain he transmuted these into everliving phrases. At the memory of Justice Shallow he smiles, and he recalls with longing his cup of mulled sack and his hour gossip with Dame Quickley. He has forgotten that Celestial flight when, like the Queen Bee he spread his wings and soared into the Empyrean, returning to earth impregnated with Immortal Accomplishment. In his own care-free way he made no attempt to hive his Heaven-begotten Progeny, nor did he realize that the buzzing of their wings would grow into such melodious notes that others would feel impelled to register them. For this reason it is said that another was allowed to lay its moth eggs in a fabric too precious to have been thus defiled.

On Earth he ignored those Ancients, though occasionally he borrowed some trifle from them. When they attempted to bind him with their fetters, he broke these restraining bands as if they were wythes of willow and, in defiance, sang songs so marvelous that he unseated them and himself occupied their vacated throne.

For many years but few were admitted from that New Continent with which, because of your latest reincarnation, you are now familiar; yet these few, by reason of their accomplishments, have markedly increased the attractiveness of a residence, and enjoyment of the life lived in Aidenn.

Surely you recognize that wingless one so vivaciously talking to the gentle-faced, high-browed man who is conspicuous by reason of his wing-spread? Although lovable qualities and many accomplishments make this one a welcome guest, unaided, he could never have scaled these Heights. For this reason his right to admittance here has been questioned.

You have seen him on the wing? Those appendages which evidently deceive you, are not wings. They are *alae*, such as those possessed by the flying fish, which can support temporary flight only when the start is with sufficient momentum. He was fortunate in the fact that he resided in a locality in which the climate is possessed of that peculiar quality that transforms such wing-like appendages into pinions; in that mirage-like atmosphere such illusions are not infrequent. Many who inhabit that region appear to soar but with the most favoring breezes they cannot attain Aidenn. There, he was "The Autocrat." It was he who so felicitously described "The Race of Life." The one with whom he converses is Asteroid, the winner of that Race. Yes, Asteroid does bear a marked resemblance to the Great Stone Face. Although his name is now blazoned he had but an indifferent recep-

tion in the world from which he came. He refused to travel the Highways. It is certain that his wings disturbed no one and that they were never soiled. So hidden was the Many-gabled House in which he lived that few could find the Byway leading to it; so concealed was it by the spell of his magic that its actuality was denied.

Both Asteroid and the Autocrat reside in the Vale where the gently flowing waters tend to somnolence. Only occasionally does Asteroid scale these Heights for he prefers the quietude of his Edenic abode.

Naturally you do not recognize that other presence who accompanies these two. His spindling legs barely support the corpulent body. Occasionally he serves to amuse. Whenever the Autocrat pronounces the name "Asteroid" there seems to be an elision of the last syllable, and this ungainly being responds. What is really remarkable is that, on earth, this one had seemed a desirable companion. Familiarly known as Dives it was he, under the entry name "Sorrel," whom the World judged to have won that Race. So swiftly did he run and so reckless was he of muck and mire that the yellow mud with which he was encased was mistaken for an *aureola*.

His occasional admission here has been tolerated by reason of an incident for which only indirectly is he responsible. From the mud that was scaled from him one of the World's greatest Libraries was constructed. He can not understand why one who so freely furnished the Fertilizer should not participate in the Harvest.

Necessarily you recognize the One occupying the Heights. He could be none other—Israfel. Do you not recall his description:

> In Heaven a Spirit doth dwell
> 'Whose heart strings are a lute;'
> None sing so wildly well
> As the angel Israfel,

> And the giddly stars, (so legends tell)
> Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
> Of his voice, all mute.
> If I could dwell
> Where Israfel
> Hath dwelt, and he where I,
> He might not sing so wildly well
> A mortal melody,
> While a bolder note than this might swell
> From my lyre within the sky.

Many years ago there was a young country endowed with all that constitutes earthy greatness but it lacked a soul. It abounded in Highways which led to all eminences and to every point of vantage, but its Byways were narrow and straight and many difficulties beset those who travelled upon them. Travellers necessarily followed the Highways, or they suffered privations unbearable. Only on them could food and drink be found. These Highways were constructed of earth and were cut deep in ruts. In many places filth offended, for this way was travelled by flocks of geese not inaptly called "Quacks of Helicon." They cluttered and befouled the way, gabbling incessantly. For this reason certain of these Highways became impassable for those demanding quiet and cleanliness.

Although this Nation possessed all the qualities that constituted greatness, and was peculiarly adapted for seizing all material things that made for prosperity, being especially gifted with the faculty of selecting that which made for individual betterment, they were singularly lacking in the environment requisite for intellectual growth. For their regeneration we sent Israfel, our best beloved. We armed him with mighty wings arrow-pointed, and so sharply barbed that they could penetrate the most indurated coating of self-conceit. It became his task to drive these literary quacks from the Highways. He was compelled to strike and occasionally to flay them

when their skins became unduly calloused. It was believed that his presence and example would prove the leavening necessary for their intellectual regeneration. He found them unruly pupils who would not be taught by example, nor would they accept instruction. Although mightily armed Israfel could not prevail, and association with them brought upon him befoulment unbelievable. We knew of the hostility and persecution that had been heaped upon other of our Messengers equally powerfully winged, and that aid and comfort must be furnished for his protection during those dark hours when his wings grew over-heavy and dragged him down. For this reason we sent Her—Demeter, the Great Mother—to protect and shield him in this unequal struggle. Do you not observe her—that one with her arm protectingly thrown around his shoulders, while he holds one other by the hand? This one clings to him, and shrinkingly avoids all others. We call her Astarte. She is an ethereal spirit too delicately constitutioned to have long withstood the rigors of that inhospitable climate from which she came. In the life lived there these three suffered bitterly and they still bear the stigmata of their crucifixion. Time, with happier surroundings, may obliterate their scars. Here, they are inseparable and together they receive the homage of the Elect.

Observe Israfel, oblivious of all else in the rapt attention with which he regards that Reader! Yes, it is the Great Laureate whom, once upon a time, Israfel so enthusiastically praised. Here, he and Israfel are in constant communion; together they give forth their songs with cadence so mellifluous that it accords with the Heavenly Choir.

That figure with noble mien, whose snow white hair and flowing beard so markedly distinguish him? Israfel beckons him to approach and The Laureate extends a

welcoming hand, yet he hesitates to become one of this group and remains apart patiently awaiting Posterity's verdict. It is said that he adopted and translated whatever could be found that was harmonious and beautiful, but that his own creations lacked substance. Whatever the verdict be, it is certain that he deserved the quotation that Israfel once applied to him: *nil tetigit quod non ornavit.* Surely all things he touched he glorified.

And that one, so handsome and debonair with the flowing locks, who bears himself so proudly? He approaches confidently and Israfel greets him as an equal, though The Laureate fails to recognize him. Israfel presents him as a poet but The Laureate can recall no performance. With a shudder he does recall one couplet:

> But the wind without was bitter and sharp
> Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it made a harp.

He fails to recognize this description for the tonsure is perfect and not one stray lock can be mistaken for the string of a harp. He cannot understand why an Ambassador apparelled in knee breeches and silk stockings, still wearing the insignia that marked him as a representative to the Court of St. James, has been admitted to Aidenn. He does not know that Israfel urged it as a reward of an old friendship.

No, as a rule no one suffering with mental disorder is allowed admission here. Yet it occasionally happens that only by such admission can those afflicted with certain forms of incurable mania be quieted.

Although these bibliomaniac patients have been segregated and, under no circumstances, are they allowed to approach our guests, nevertheless residence on these Heights alleviates their mental restlessness. The air is impregnated with the effuvia emanating from genius and, for this reason, exerts a balsamic and soporific influence

most soothing to those obsessed with this peculiar affliction. It is true that while they were inhabitants of the earth they treated many of our guests contumeliously and failed to recognize their great performance. Occasionally they are allowed admission, for they act as scavengers carefully gathering the smallest scraps of paper that have been touched by the hands of the Elect. With pride they exhibit and boast of their collections, imagining that this ownership reflects glory upon them; their bibliomania is a harmless form of disease and in some unexplainable way this occupation quiets them. The treatment is merely palliative for the more they indulge the more confirmed do they become in their mania.

And that creature wobbling on two legs but giving no other evidence that it is human? I know that it is a horror and that it disgusts all whom it approaches. It is admitted for a specific purpose and it can only enter when accompanied by its keeper, that limping individual with the cloven foot.

Israfel occasionally poses as a scientist and has even attempted, with his mighty wings, to scale the heavenly firmament, but so peculiarly were they constructed that they could not sustain him in such a flight. He is extremely friendly with that old gentleman—here known under the cognomen Werther—who, though a peer among our most noble poets, still insists that by mistake he was assigned to these Heights. He believes that his proper abode is in that Valley where the Scientists dwell. He demanded entrance there but was coldly received, and his pretensions were ignored, so that, under protest, he has returned and again abides with us. Werther and Israfel are bound by a bond of friendship based on the admiration that each bears the other because of their scientific attainments. While their fields of research lie far apart, the spirit of investigation animates both and draws them

into the closest union. It is true that neither one fully comprehends the arguments adduced by the other, yet, for that very reason, they are the more tolerant of all theories advanced.

Werther was explaining that our *embryonic* development closely follows the permanent forms found in the lower animals; at one time we were spineless and heartless and only in the course of aeons did we begin to assume the human shape and that we were altogether neither brute nor human; he further asserted that, sooner or later, the missing link would be found. At this Israfel became greatly interested. He insisted that once he had met such an animal. It was at his urgent solicitation that this wobbling creature was admitted, doubly welcome because he was guarded by one whom Werther knew as Mephistopheles, and with whom he had become somewhat closely associated. Werther expects to demonstrate on this beast that the cranium consists of vertebrae so expanded as to hold the slowly enlargening brain. Whether these vertebrae are three or four in number seemed to be the matter under discussion. I fear that they are now contemplating vivisection in order to determine this unsettled question, but the Great Jehovah will forbid. He knows that this animal is microcephalous and that if dissected it will exhibit an abnormal diminution of brain matter. This animal is not responsible for its abnormality. I fear that the Potter was careless and that many other deformities exist that also unfit it for human intercourse. That bulging protuberance is not a heart: the mass that resembles one is a jelly fish with its cold and clammy processes adhering to and besliming all things with which it comes in contact. This animal once infused into a crystal chalice that Israfel gave to it for safe keeping a potion so nauseous that it sickened the whole world. Why hold it on a leash? It is a treacherous beast and is void of understanding.

For some reason it assumes that this is its rightful home and, were it not restrained, it would disgust our guests by its beslobbering attempts to lick their hands. It seems that once upon a time this was its working plan that for a short time succeeded. By some it was regarded as a possible aspirant for this abode; unfortunately for its pretensions not one of its friends has been able to attain these Heights and for this reason none here will give it recognition: on the other hand it failed to recognize those who were rightfully entitled to enter. After all it is to be more pitied than despised; being both brainless and heartless, it cannot be over-harshly judged because its actions did not square with the dictates of humanity.

In this beast's attempt to deceive the World it was partially successful in passing off those long and flapping ears as wings, so unusually large and mobile were they. At a distance they easily could have been so mistaken. Though this thing wore the skin of a lion this was soon recognized to be a harmless pose. Whenever and wherever it opened its mouth, the deep and reverberating tones of the voice made evident its species. For some years it did succeed in hiding its greatest deformity but when, in time, that protuberance occupying the heart's position was opened, the stench became a public scandal. The World has tried to forget him but it can not because he has gone down to posterity as "*the unfaithful servant who betrayed his trust.*"

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

POE'S REVIEW OF GRISWOLD'S "THE POETS AND POETRY OF AMERICA" PUBLISHED IN THE "PHILADELPAIA SATURDAY MUSEUM" IN THE YEAR 1843

Reprinted from Gill's "The Life of Edgar Allan Poe."

"THE POETS AND POETRY OF AMERICA. With an Historical Introduction. By Rufus W. Griswold.

> Here the free spirit of mankind at length
> Throws its last fetters off; and who shall place
> A limit to the giant's unchained strength,
> Or curb his swiftness in the forward race?
>
> BRYANT.

> Ere long thine every stream shall find a tongue,
> Land of the many waters.—HOFFMAN.

Third Edition. Revised, with Illustrations. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, Chestnut Street."

Perhaps no work ever appeared whose announcement created a greater sensation among the poetasters of the land, whose editor was so puffed, praised, and glorified in advance, and which was so universally assailed on its advent, as "The Poets and Poetry of America." Is Mr. — we ask his pardon,—the Reverend Mr. Griswold, the man of varied talents, of genius, of known skill, of overweening intellect, he was somewhile pictured, or is he the arrant literary quack he is now entitled by the American press? If he is a man of genius, or even great talents, signal injustice has been done him; and if not, his assumption of such a character cannot be too sufficiently reprobated. Genius we defined in a former review. The best means to establish a man's right to the title, is to examine his past course and his present position.

The first knowledge we had of Mr. Griswold was his occupancy of the position of assistant, or junior editor, some years since, to a minor sheet entitled "The New Yorker," then of the New York "Brother

Jonathan," then in the same capacity to the "Daily Standard," (a political sheet published in Philadelphia during the Harrison campaign,) under that Atlas of intellect, Francis L. Grund, and finally, on Mr. Grund's withdrawal from the connection, sole editor. The paper (a notorious fact!) immediately fell off in circulation, and died in less than three weeks after his assuming the editorship. We next find him in his former subordinate capacity to the "Boston Notion," and finally as editor to the "Post," and "Graham's Magazine," or, as it is entitled by that chaste and exquisite sheet, the New York Herald, "The American Blackwood."

After the death of the "Standard," Carey & Hart announced the present work, and our *author* arose from comparative insignificance to be the idol of all the poetical editors and would-be great men in America. The book appeared, and "*la fleur d'une heure*" faded into nothingness.

"Up like a rocket, and down like its stick,"

is a terse epitaph on his career.

One question now remains to be answered: Did the "Jonathan" or the "Notion" attain any higher position than before, during Mr. G.'s connection with them; or have the "Post" and "Graham's Magazine" improved under his supervision? The "Standard" we leave out of the question, as it expired under his management. Certainly not as to the former; and the brilliant career of Graham's Magazine under Mr. Poe's care, and its subsequent trashy literary character since his retirement, is a sufficient response. Mr. Griswold's *genius*, at least, has not benefited his employers. But that he has no claim to that character is evident, and we do not believe his warmest admirer (if he has one?) will insist on his right to bear the title. That he has *some* talents we allow, but they are only those of a *mediocre* character; indeed, every third man one might meet in a day's walk is his equal, if not his superior. As a critic, his judgment is worthless, for a critic should possess sufficient independence and honesty to mete out justice to all men, without fear, favor, or partiality, as well as be a man of various acquirements, or at least a linguist and classical scholar. Is Mr. Griswold one of these? No! The review department of Graham's Magazine, and its original literary contents, monthly, exhibit ample evidence of his want of taste and inability if not of critical honesty; while its very cover displays his want of judgment in common-sense business matters, and his egotism and petty envy and dislikes of men he *dares* not openly assail. As an instance, we have the

"Principal Contributors," W. C. Bryant, J. F. Cooper, R. H. Dana, H. W. Longfellow, C. F. Hoffman (*horresco referens!*), T. C. Grattan, N. P. Willis, and H. W. Herbert, arranged in *proper* order. We ask, is this in accordance with the age, established reputation, or merits of the several authors?

Are Dana and Hoffman the superiors of N. P. Willis, who has written more beautiful and *true* poetry than either of them? Is Bryant a better poet than Longfellow? Certainly not, for in Longfellow's pages the spirit of poetry—*ideality*—walks abroad, while Bryant's sole merit is tolerable versification and fine marches of description. Longfellow is unquestionably the best poet in America. These gentlemen would be better placed in alphabetical order, or at least in accordance with their actual merits. In the latter view they might be ranked thus: H. W. Longfellow, W. C. Bryant, N. P. Willis, and R. H. Dana, as poets, and J. F. Cooper and T. C. Grattan, as prose writers; while such names as C. F. Hoffman, whose only merit is his wealth, and H. W. Herbert, who has written more trash than any man living with the exception of Fay, should be excluded to make room for those of men of more substantial character as writers.

In the "Prospectus," Mr. Griswold's self-esteem is strangely developed. Here we have him in his capacity of "*author*" of the "Poets and Poetry of America," as thirteenth in the list, and of course superior in rank to Sargent, Benjamin, Simms, Lowell, Thomas, Poe, Hill, our own Conrad (one of the sweetest poets of the time), Greeley, &c., &c., who follow him. Unexampled modesty! In the same list we find C. J. Peterson ranked as the superior of Greeley, Ingraham, Colton, Robert Morris, Reynell Coates, Field, &c.

Again, how modestly our critic puffs himself in his remarks on the "Editorial Department":—"*The criticisms of Graham's Magazine are acknowledged in all parts of this country to be superior in acumen, honesty, and independence to those of any contemporary. Indeed, while a majority of the monthly and quarterly journals have become mere advertising mediums for the booksellers, in which everything 'in print' is indiscriminately praised, this periodical is looked upon as a just and discriminating arbiter between authors and readers, in which both can have implicit confidence.*" Pretty well that, for a modest man, Mr. G., particularly in the assumption of praise given to the *former* editor, to whose criticisms it was awarded, and who, it is well known, *made* the magazine. Is this, or is this not, sailing under false colors? However, our compiler is right. Any flag is better than his own. And in literture, as in piracy, the free-trader always "runs up" the best

at his fore; but had we done this, we should blush at our own impudence in knowing that we had been guilty of one of the most barefaced pieces of literary swindling of modern days.

Mais, revenous à nos moutons, and a very muttonish production it is—"The Poets and Poetry of America." Is it fair to condemn Mr. Griswold's ability to act as a judge and critic of our poets without examining into his poetical and critical competency? Certainly not; and in the premises we shall act justly, generously, and impartially. "Just!" we think we hear our *poet* exclaim, like the man arraigned for horsestealing, when told by his judge he should have *justice* done him. "Justice! plase your Honor's glory—that's the very thing I don't want." Mr. G., however, claims to be a poet, and deduces from that position his competency to judge of the poetry of others. Let us apply the touchstone to his latest acknowledged article, "THE SUNSET STORM," published in his (Graham's Magazine, September, 1842; and if that does not prove him to possess as little of the divine *afflatus*, artistical skill, and knowledge of plain English construction, as a Desert-of-Sahara Arab, let our criticism go for naught.

We shall premise with a short notice of the art of versification; an art which our best poets are ignorant of, or wilfully misunderstand, and which our first writers on Prosody have entirely misrepresented. Cooper, whose grammar is extensively used, defines it to be "the arrangement of a certain number of syllables according to certain laws," yet lays down no laws for its government, but drops the subject, fearful of burning his fingers. Indeed, all the writers on Prosody, from Brown to Murray, have almost entirely waived the subject, while the little they have said is founded on, and consequently a mass of—error.

VERSIFICATION is the art by which various feet of equal quantity, though differing in the number of syllables, are arranged in harmonious order, and made to form verse. POETRY, in its most confined sense, is *the result of versification*, but may be more properly defined as *the rhythmical personification of existing or ideal beauty*. One defines it as the "rhythmical *creation* of beauty"; but though it certainly is a "creation of beauty" in itself, it is more properly a personification, for the poet only personifies the images previously created by his mind. FEET are the parts of verse by which, when harmoniously associated, the reader steps along, as it were, in a measured manner, through the whole. They are composed of one, two, or three variously accented and unaccented syllables. The only feet admitted by our language are the Iambus, Trochee, Dactyl, Anapest, and Caesura.

The Tribrach, Amphibrach, and Pyrrhic, though adopted in English Prosody by very erudite writers, never did and never can exist in its poetry. Of these hereafter.

The IAMBUS is composed of two syllables, one short and one long; as,

"I stand | beneath | the mys | tic moon."

The TROCHEE, of the same number, but exactly the reverse of the former; as,

"In the | greenest | of our | valleys."

Here "of" is made long by emphasis.

"In a | sunny, | smiling | valley,"

is a better exemplification of the Trochee.

The SPONDEE is composed of two long syllables; as, "wild wood," "pale moon," "wind sown," and is only used to prevent monotony, or to produce some striking effect in versification. In the commencement of verse the Trochee is preferable. It is likewise the only foot, with the exception of the Caesura, which cannot be used to form continuous verse. Longfellow thought it *might*, and murdered harmony most horribly in attempting English Hexameter, a species of verse which, though beautiful in the Latin, can never be introduced in our language, owing to its wanting a sufficient number of Spondees. A language correctly described by Holmes as—

"Our grating English, whose Teutonic jar
Shakes the rack'd axle of Art's rattling car."

The DACTYL is a foot composed of three syllables, two short, preceded by one long; as,

"Ragged and | weary one, | where art thou | traveling?"

The ANAPEST is the converse of the Dactyl; as,

"On a rock | by the O | cean, all lone | ly and sad."

The CAESURA—the word is from the Greek, and signifies "a pause" —is a foot composed of one long syllable, equal in quantity to, that is, occupying the same time in pronunciation as the Dactyl, Anapest, Iambus or Trochee. It is properly used in English poetry to give a

sonorous close to, or to produce a striking and forcible commencement in verse. We shall give an example from Longfellow, who uses it in the latter case, without knowing of its existence, as a distinct fact.

"In the | market | place of | Bruges | stands the | belfry, | old and | *brown.*"

Here, by reading the verse, the ear will observe that "brown," which is the Caesura, consumes the same time as any of the Trochees of which the line is composed.

All our Prosodists define the Caesura (and we give the definition in our own words, as it is impossible to form an idea of its use from theirs) as a pause introduced for the purpose of producing harmony, in a single verse of couplet, between "two members of the same verse," by which the one is placed in direct comparison with the other; as,

"See the bold youth″ strain up the threat'ning steep,
Rush through the thickets″, down the valleys sweep."

(″) Being the marks by which they designate the Caesura, which they use, as will be readily perceived, only in an elocutionary sense.

We, too, use the Caesura as a pause—a pause compelled by the position of, and upon the foot—of the voice, which renders it equal in quantity to any of the larger feet, and at the same time gives to the close of the verse, where it is most frequently found, a singular richness, as well as sonorous fulness and force. When the Caesura terminates a verse, the poet can immediately step in the next into another species of foot without producing the slightest discord. The following is an example of its commencing and concluding a stanza.

March! | *March!* | *March!*
From the | yawning | grave they | come;
And | thousands | rise, with | lidless | eyes,
As | taps the | fun'ral | *drum.*
Heavi | ly their | white arms | swinging, |
Clatter, | clatter | on they | go;
Up in | curling | eddies | flinging |
High the | fleecy | *snow.*

It will be seen that this stanza is scanned precisely as if it were written in one continuous verse, which is the proper mode in, and peculiar to our language; as,

March! | *March!* | *March!* | From the | yawning | grave they | come, and | thousands | rise with | lidless | eyes as | taps the | funeral | *drum.*

The arrangement of the same depending entirely upon the will of the poet.

The Caesura has been used, "time out of mind," by all our poets, but with a perfect ignorance of its present character. This discovery, as well as that of the above mode of scansion, was left to Edgar A. Poe, who has spent more time in analyzing the construction of our language than any living grammarian, critic, or essayist. The following is an example of his use of this foot in the "Haunted Palace:"

"In the greenest of our valleys,
By good angels tenant*ed,*
Once a fair and stately palace
(Snow-white palace) reared its *head.*
In the monarch Thought's dominion,
It stood *there!*
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so *fair.*"

With this brief analysis, sufficient to explain the subject, we return to the examination of the "Sunset Storm."

The sum | mer sun | has sunk | to rest
Very fair, Mr. G.
Below | the green | clad hills.|

This is Iambic, the simplest of all verse; yet in the second verse, or as Mr. G. would call it, the second "*line,*" we have a positive error. "Green clad hills" are three consecutive long syllables, and "clad hills" being a Spondee, has no business in that position in the verse. Mr. Griswold commences with a quiet picture of the sun sinking to rest, which the sun always does quietly, as he ought; and the second should, consequently, harmonize with the preceding verse, to carry out the idea. "Green clad hills" is as harsh as the grating of a coffee-mill.

"The summer sun has sunk to rest
Below the" lofty "hills,"

or any other sort of "hills," where the adjective is an Iambus, would make it melody. Let us proceed:

"And through | the skies | career | ing fast,
The storm | cloud rides | upon | the blast,
And now | the rain | distil*ls*."

Here the same error is again repeated, "storm-cloud" being, like "green-clad," a compound word, and *distil* is spelt with two "ll's."

"The flash | we see, | the peal | we hear, |
With winds | *blent in* | their wild | career."

"Blent in" is the most horrible massacre of harmony we ever encountered. It is neither fish, flesh, nor fowl; neither a Spondee, Trochee, or an Iambus; and, deuce take us! if we know *what* to make of it. In Christian charity, Mr. G., enlighten us!

"Till pains | the ear."

A most appropriate verse. It certainly pains our ear to proceed with the next.

"It is | the voice | of the | Storm-King."

Did any one ever read such delectable doggerel? Did any one ever see such a number of short syllables collected in one "line," or see such a *line* published, with a grave face, as poetry. We defy even Mrs. Wood to *sing* it musically. "The voice" is the only legitimate Iambus in the whole *line*. "It is," we are compelled to read "It *is*," to make the verse read musically. "Of the" is a Trochee, unless Mr. G. would have us read "of *the*," which, from the versification precedent and subsequent, we should imagine he wishes us to do. "Storm-King" is another compound word, and a Spondee.

"Leading | his ban | ner'd hosts | along | the sky,
And drench | ing with | his floods | the ster | ile lands | and dry."

Here we have a Trochee, "leading," commencing the verse. This is not objectionable, for it expresses an action—"leading his banner'd hosts." Its introduction frequently produced a fine artistical and highly poetical effect, and the poet's as well as the reader's ear is the best judge when it should be used. We will give one or two examples, since we are riding our favorite horse of versification.

"And loud | ly on | the ev' | ning's breath, |
Rang the | shrill cry | of sud | den death!"

"Rang the," a Trochee, followed by the Spondee "shrill cry," ex-

presses forcibly the actual presence and force of the sound on the breath, that is, over the low murmur of the evening wind. Again, in Byron's "Childe Harold,"

"The sky | is changed, | and such | a change! | O night!
And storm, | and dark | ness! Ye | are wond | rous strong,
Yet love | ly in | your strength | as is | the light |
Of a | dark eye | in wo | man. Far | along
From peak | to peak | her rat | tling crags | among |
Leaps the | live thun | der! Not | from one | lone cloud," &c.

Here is the same definite expression of passion and action in "of a dark eye," and "leaps the live thunder." You can feel the loveliness of the eye, and hear the crash of, and see the thunder leaping. How different are Mr. Griswold's and Lord Byron's descriptions of a Storm!

We copy from, the same Magazine that contains the "Sunset Storm," for Mr. Griswold's especial edification, a fine specimen of Iambic verse, and advise him when next he uses that "foot," to take it as a model. It is from the "Haunted Heart," by a Miss Mary L. Lawson, whose ear seems to be nearly faultlessly correct.

"Ne'er from his heart the vision fades away;
Amid the crowd, in silence and alone,
The stars by night, the clear blue sky by day,
Bring to his mind the happiness that's flown;
A tone of song, the warbling of the birds,
The simplest thing that memory endears,
Can still recall the form, the voice, the words
Of her, the best beloved of early years."

In the same poem we find the following highly-finished and descriptive lines:

"*And watched the rippling currents as they played*
In ebb and flow upon the banks of flowers."

We stand, as it were, upon the river's bank!

We mentioned something before of the use of Spondees in Latin Hexameter, and to make our position perfectly understood, shall quote a few examples from different authors.

"In nova | fert ani | mus mu | tatas | dicere | formas |
Corpora | Di coep | tis nam | vos mu | tastis et | illas."—OVID.
"Tityre | tu patu | lae recu | bans sub | tegmine | fagi."—VIRGIL.
"Nox ruit | et fus | cis tel | lurem, | plectitur | alis."—IBID.
This last line is written

"Nox ruit et fuscis tellurem *am*plectitur alis."

But in the words where "um," "am," "em," or a vowel, occur, the syllable is taken off by elision. Again, where the line commences with a Spondee,

"Felix | qui potu | it re | rum cog | noscere | causas."—LUCRETIUS.

Ergo. Mr. Griswold ought to be happy in knowing his book to be the cause of our review.

Now, gentle reader, is Mr. Griswold a versifier?—we have not touched him as a Poet,—and if not, and we assert he is not, and never was able to understand the first principles of versification, what shall be said of his presumption in becoming the judge of a race of men whose simplest productions are beyond his comprehension? We have more of his *poetry* (spirits of Pope, Byron, *et al.*, forgive our desecration of the name!) on hand, but in none can we find two correct consecutive lines, nor do we wish to inflict them on the reader. But we have not yet done with the "Sunset Storm." Independent of its worse than tyro-like versification, it is a heterogeneous compound of sheer, naked nonsense and rank bombast. We shall examine the first verse, that which we have already submitted to scansion, and then, if any one deems Mr. G. a competent judge of true poetry, we hope he will inflict one of *his* collections upon him annually. Now for it!

"The summer sun has sunk to rest
Below the green-clad hills,
And through the skies careering fast,
The storm-cloud rides upon the blast,
And now the rain distills."

We pause to credit Mr. G. with a new idea—the clouds distilling rain. We have heard of men distilling whiskey, alcohol, &c., but never before of clouds distilling rain.

"The flash we see, the peal we hear,
With winds *blent in* their wild career,
Till pains the ear."

"The flash" of *what* do we *see?* "The peal" of *what* do "we *hear?*" Is lightning and thunder to be understood, or is it the flash and peal of the *storm?* If the latter is meant, it is another new idea. If the former—but it is not said,—how can "winds" be "blent in" with a flash of lightning? Mr. G., Mr. G., you are as mystical as Kant, and as incomprehensible as Wordsworth, without possessing the slightest claim to the common sense of either.

"It is the voice of the storm-king
Riding upon the lightning's wing."
We are now informed that this "blent in" mixture is
. . . "the voice of the Storm-King
Riding upon the lightning's wing;"

and we are happy to hear it. It is no wonder dairy-women complain of their milk being curdled the morning after a storm.

"Leading his bannered's hosts along the sky,
And drenching with his floods the sterile lands and dry."

Is this even good grammar? Is it "the voice" or "the Storm-King" "leading his banner'd hosts along the sky"? Tell us that!

Did any one ever read such nonsense? We *never* did, and shall hereafter eschew everything that bears Rufus Wilmot Griswold's name, as strongly as the Moslemite the forbidden wine, or the Jew the "unmentionable flesh." But we must say, ere we leave the "Sunset Storm," that, with the exception of Mathews' "Wakondah," Pop Emmons' "Fredoniad," and some portions of Hoffman's "Vigil of Faith," the world never even saw such balderdash.

We defined Poetry "to be the rhythmical personification of existing or ideal beauty"; and here we shall give a vivid example of our idea, an example which even Mr. Griswold acknowledges "to possess a statue-like definitiveness and warmth of coloring." It is the "SLEEPING BEAUTY," by Tennyson,—the most perfect conception of loveliness we ever saw, or ever expect to see, and had Tennyson written nothing else, it would have made him immortal.

"Year after year unto her feet,
(She lying on her couch alone,)
Along the purple coverlet
The maiden's jet-black hair has grown;
On either side her trancèd form

Forth streaming from a braid of pearl;
The slumbrous light is rich and warm,
And moves not on the rounded curl.

The silk, star-broider'd coverlet
Unto her limbs itself doth mould
Languidly ever; and, amid
The full black ringlets downward rolled,
Glows forth each softly-shadow'd arm
With bracelets of the diamond bright;
Her constant beauty doth inform
Stillness with love, and day with light.

She sleeps! her breathings are not heard,
In palace chambers far apart,
The fragrant tresses are not stirred
That lie upon her charmed heart.
She sleeps! on either hand up swells,
The gold-fring'd pillow lightly prest:
She sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells,
A perfect form, in perfect rest."

In the first place, this is a legitimate subject of poerty, finished with the highest artistical skill, burning with genius and ideality, and secondly it conveys to the mind in the very title that richest image of loveliness—a sleeping woman! Words cannot convey our conception of its beauty, nor our homage to the genius of its author. The italicized lines are the finest passages.

Now for Mr. Griswold's critical powers. We shall quote some few passages from one of his latest reviews, and that on the works of the author of the Charmed Sleeper,—Alfred Tennyson, whose genius and originality have excited the wonder and admiration of the best critics in Europe, and the imitative faculties of the principal poets of America. "His chief characteristics pertaining to style, *they* will not long attract regard." Here we have a gross grammatical error—*two* nominatives to *one* verb, "characteristics" and "they" to "will." "He tricks out common thoughts in dresses so unique it is not always easy to identify them." (Is not this originality? yet in the next portion of the sentence we hear this sapient critic say,) "but we have not seen in his works proofs of an original mind." (*O tempora! O mores!* This *Griswold* says of *Tennyson!*) Again, "as a versifier, Holmes is equal to

Tennyson, and with the same patient effort would every way surpass him." (We advise Dr. Holmes, who does possess some merit as a versifier, to beg Mr. G. not to puff him, or he may depend upon his poems being incontinently d—d.) "We desire none of his companionship!" (Don't you hope you may get it?) "Him who *stole* at first hand from Keats." Well, if this is not the height of assurance we don't know what assurance is, coming as it does from one of the most clumsy of literary thieves, and who, in his wildest aspirations, never even dreamed of an original thought. A man who does not understand the first principles of versification, the author of the "Sunset Storm"; and to speak thus of such a man as Tennyson, the author of the Sleeping Beauty we have just quoted! We can only say to Mr. Griswold, Jove protect *us* from his reviewing, and the public from what *he* deems exquisite. These remarks are from a man whose extravagant praise of Puffer Hopkins, one of the most abortive emanations ever issued from an American press, has been the daily ridicule of the whole community, and even of his own *most intimate* friends. A book which he stamps "as original," which is the most palpable imitation of Boz's style, and like all imitations, only so upon the surface, wanting anything like genuine wit, pathos, or profundity, whose serious passages are extremely ridiculous, and whose comic wonderfully tragic.

Now for the Book! the "POETS AND POETRY OF AMERICA." As regards its typography and execution, it is very, very neat, and the lines around give a compactness and finish perfectly desirable to the appearance of its pages.

Let us commence with the delectable matter which constitutes Mr. Griswold's original portion of the "Poets of America." In the first place we have the preface.

"*It is said that the principles of our fathers are beginning to be regarded with indifference.*" Who has said this, Mr. G.? Is the name or the principles of a Washington or Jefferson beginning to be obliterated in our hearts? Does not every American's bosom burn when he reads their names, or hears them promulgated from the rostrum? And the bursting huzzas from every lip at such a moment as the last, how well they speak that "the principles of our fathers are beginning to be regarded with indifference." Is "*love of country decaying, and are "the affections of our people in that transition state from the simplicity of Democracy to the gilded shows of Aristocratic government?*" Perish the scandal! "*Our national tastes and feelings are fashioned by the subject of kings.*" Are we to understand *this* as a poetical license or not, for

with these facts staring us in the face we cannot but imagine you've told a good many poetical *lies since* you have been in the business? If—and you assert it in set round terms—you think so, you are wrong. They are not so; at least by the majority, though they may be by the foolish few miscalled "the *first* circle of society!"—the worshippers of an Ellsler, a Morpeth, or an Ashburton, whose only merit is their wealth, and whose intellects rarely expand beyond the cut of a coat or the fashion of a mantilla. After reading such opinions promulgated, who can think our compiler a fit man to judge of *American* poetry, even had he possessed the competency. But Mr. G. is going to Europe, and there his opinions will meet with support.

Let us proceed. Ah! what have we here? "*The creation of beauty, the manifestation of the real by the ideal, in words that move in metrical array, is poetry.*" Now what is this but a direct amplification by our *poet*, of the definition of poetry—"*the rhythmical creation of beauty*"—which appeared in Mr. Poe's *critique* on Professor Longfellow's ballads, from which *we* know, and *he* knows, he stole it.

Well, we have looked over the book, and we find it just such a result as might be anticipated. The biographies are miserably written, and as to the criticisms on style, they are certainly not *critiques raisonnés*, and that simply because reason and thinking are entirely out of Mr. G.'s sphere. As to the different degrees of merit allotted to each author, we cannot help thinking it possible, but we will not say it, that *sub rosa* arrangements were made, and a proportionable quantity of fame allotted, in consideration of the *quid pro quo* received. Besides, the whole work is not even a specimen of the Poets and Poetry of America; and in giving it our unqualified condemnation, we only cite the opinion of all, even to the Poets who have been so unfortunate as to figure in its pages, and we are satisfied our review will be met with *vivas* wherever the book has been seen or read.

Now we want to know one thing: Is writing Poetry the exclusive privilege of the *aristocracy* of our country? for we are so led to imagine by finding no *poor* writers in this work. No! They are all "descended from ancient and honored families," "the sons of wealthy members of the Society of Friends," or of "eminent lawyers," or "wealthy merchants," "wealthy lawyers," themselves, &c., &c.,*ad infinitum*. How comes this? It is answered in a word. Mr. G. belongs to the class called "toady"; and as he is very ambitious of one day acquiring a position, can have no fellow-feeling for the class he would leave behind him. To this, and this alone, (and Mr. G. knows we speak—and it is as unpleasant for us to say as it is for him to hear it—*the*

truth,) two thirds of the poets owe even the transitory reputation they have acquired in this miserable book. And now that we feel in the vein, we shall propound to Mr. Griswold a few questions. Why was Robert Tyler, the author of Ahasuerus, &c., omitted? Why was Frederick W. Thomas insulted with a place as the author of *one* song, among the miscellaneous writers, after his having been written to, and "his biography and best articles" solicited? Was it not because he did not obey your dictatorial and impertinent request to write *for you* the biography of Mrs. Welby? Answer us that, Mr. Griswold! How comes it that C. Fenno Hoffman is the greatest poet in America, and that his articles figure more than two to one over Bryant, and ten to one over Lowell, Longfellow, &c.? Why were Edward Everett, LL.D., John Quincy Adams, Samuel Woodworth, (the insult might have been spared the dying poet,) Robert M. Bird, M. D., J. K. Mitchell, M. D., Sarah G. Hale, George P. Morris, Rev. William B. Tappan, Catharine H. Esling (or Miss Waterman, as she is better known), Horace Greeley, Seba Smith, Charles West Thompson, Rev. Charles W. Everest, Lieut. G. W. Patten, William Wallace (author of the Star Lyra, &c.), Mrs. Francis S. Osgood (one of our sweetest poetesses), James N. Barker, &c., &c., classed under the head of "various authors," thereby throwing openly the charge of their incompetency to sustain the name of Poets, and implying that they were only occasional scribblers? (This, and of such men, is again from Rufus Wilmot Griswold!)

Are there no such persons in existence as Anna Cora Mowatt, Lydia J. Pierson, Juliet H. Lewis, Mrs. Harriet Muzzy, Mrs. E. S. Stedman, &c.? And if so, have *they* never written poetry? And if they have, why are they omitted?

Shame on such black injustice, which is made the blacker by imposing men, of whom no one ever heard out of their own parlors, upon the public as poets, and that above their superiors in genius, talent, artistical skill, and brilliant flow of ideality and language!

Again, how came you to alter Dr. J. K. Mitchell's song in such a manner that the author scarcely knows his own production? Just think of the impudence of the thing—Rufus Wilmot Griswold altering a production of Dr. J. K. Mitchell! And now that we are in our own city, has it no poets? Are Dr. Mitchell, C. West Thompson, and Catharine H. Esling only worthy to appear in one article in your contemptible appendix? Where is the Hon. Robert T. Conrad? You surely could not have forgotten him, for his "Aylmere" has been the *most successful* of American Tragedies, and he is the author of some of

the finest poems known in American literature. Where is Professor Walter, Morton McMichael, Robert Morris (another sweet poet), the Rev. T. H. Stockton, and Dr. English? How came you to forget Mr. Spear, who was once placed by the Courier, if we remember aright, close to Shakspeare, and somewhere between Cowper and Goldsmith? We might name others. However, all these gentlemen should be gratified at their non-appearance in the volume before us, for if ever such a thing as literary ruin existed, or exists, nine tenths of the *Poets* (!) of America are ruined forever by the praise of Mr. Griswold! This is our unvarnished opinion; and as we have established the fact of our knowing something of Poetry and its concomitants, and that Mr. Griswold is as ignorant of it and them as a Kikapoo Indian, we fancy it will pass for current coin.

But to close this affair. Had Mr. Griswold the genius of a Shakespeare, the powers of a Milton, or the critical learning of a Macaulay, he could not stem the torrent of animadversion this book has raised; but must be overwhelmed by the tide of public disapprobation which has set in so strongly upon him; but as he has neither the one nor the other, what will be his fate? Forgotten, save only by those whom he has injured and insulted, he will sink into oblivion, without leaving a landmark to tell that he once existed; or, if he is spoken of hereafter, he will be quoted as *the unfaithful servant who abused his trust.*

APPENDIX B

GRAHAM'S REPLY TO THE OBITUARY THAT APPEARED IN THE "NEW YORK TRIBUNE" SIGNED "LUDWIG"

Reprinted from "Graham's Magazine," March, 1850

My Dear Willis,—

In an article of yours which accompanies the two beautiful volumes of the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, you have spoken with so much truth and delicacy of the deceased, and, with the magical touch of genius, have called so warmly up before me the memory of our lost friend as you and I both seem to have known him, that I feel warranted in addressing to you the few plain words I have to say in defence of his character as set down by Mr. Griswold.

Although the article, it seems, appeared originally in the *New York Tribune*, it met my eye for the first time in the volumes before me. I now purpose to take exception to it in the most public manner. I knew Mr. Poe well, far better than Mr. Griswold; and by the memory of old times, when he was an editor of "Graham," I pronounce this exceedingly ill-timed and unappreciative estimate of the character of our lost friend, *unfair and untrue*. It is Mr. Poe as seen by the writer while laboring under a fit of the nightmare, but so dark a picture has no resemblance to the *living man*. Accompanying these beautiful volumes, it is an immortal infamy, the death's head over the entrance to the garden of beauty, a horror that clings to the brow of morning, whispering of murder. It haunts the memory through every page of his writings, leaving upon the heart a sensation of utter gloom, a feeling almost of terror. The only relief we feel is in knowing that it is not true, that it is a fancy sketch of a perverted, jaundiced vision. The man who could deliberately say of Edgar Allan Poe, in a notice of his life and writings prefacing the volumes which were to become a priceless souvenir to all who loved him, that his death might startle many, "*but that few would be grieved by it,*" and blast the whole fame of the man by such a paragraph as follows, is a judge dishonored. He is not Mr. Poe's peer, and I challenge him before the country even as a juror in the case:

"His harsh experience had deprived him of all faith in man or woman. He had made up his mind upon the numberless complexities of the social world, and the whole system with him was an imposture. This conviction gave a direction to his shrewd and naturally unamiable character. Still, though he regarded society as *composed altogether of villains*, the sharpness of his intellect was not of that kind which enabled him to cope with villainy, while it continually caused him, by overshots, to fail of the success of honesty. He was in many respects like Francis Vivian in Bulwer's novel of 'The Caxtons.' Passion, in him, comprehended many of the worst emotions which militate against human happiness. You could not contradict him, but you raised quick choler; *you could not speak of wealth, but his cheek paled with gnawing envy*. The astonishing natural advantages of this poor boy,—his beauty, his readiness, the daring spirit that breathed around him like a fiery atmosphere, had raised his constitutional self-confidence into an arrogance that turned his very claims to admiration into prejudices against him. *Irascible, envious, bad enough*, but not the worst, for these salient angles were all varnished over with a cold, repellant cynicism; his passions vented themselves in sneers. *There seemed to him no moral susceptibility;* and, *what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little or nothing of the true point of honor*. He had, to a morbid excess, that desire to rise which is vulgarly called ambition, but no wish for the esteem or the love of his species; only the hard wish to succeed,—not shine, nor serve,—succeed, that he might have the right to despise a world which galled his self-conceit."

Now this is dastardly, and, what is worse, it is false. It is very adroitly done, with phrases very well turned, and with gleams of truth shining out from a setting so dusky, as to look devilish. Mr. Griswold does not feel the worth of the man he has undervalued; he had no sympathies in common with him, and has allowed old prejudices and old enmities to steal, insensibly perhaps, into the coloring of his picture. They were for years totally uncongenial, if not enemies, and during that period Mr. Poe, in a scathing lecture upon "The Poets of America," gave Mr. Griswold some raps over the knuckles of force sufficient to be remembered. He had, too, in the exercise of his functions as critic, put to death summarily the literary reputation of some of Mr. Griswold's best friends; and their ghosts cried in vain for him to avenge them during Poe's lifetime; and it almost seems as if the present hacking at the cold remains of him who struck them down, is a sort of compensation for duty long delayed, for reprisal long desired, but deferred. But without this, the opportunities afforded Mr. Griswold to estimate the character of Poe occurred, in the main, after his stability had been wrecked, his whole nature in a degree changed, and with all his prejudices aroused and active. Nor do I consider Mr. Griswold *competent*, with all the opportunities he may have cultivated or acquired, to act as his judge, to

dissect that subtle and singularly fine intellect, to probe the motives and weigh the actions of that proud heart. His whole nature, that distinctive presence of the departed, which now stands impalpable, yet in strong outline before me, as I knew him and *felt* him to be, eludes the rude grasp of a mind so warped and uncongenial as Mr. Griswold's.

But it may be said, my dear Willis, that Mr. Poe himself deputed him to act as his literary executor, and that he must have felt some confidence, in his ability at least, if not in his integrity, to perform the functions imposed, with discretion and honor. I do not purpose, now, to enter into any examination of the appointment of Mr. Griswold, nor of the wisdom of his appointment, to the solemn trust of handing the fair fame of the deceased, unimpaired, to that posterity to which the dying poet bequeathed his legacy, but simply to question its faithful performance. Among the true friends of Poe in this city—and he had some such here—there are those, I am sure, that *he* did not class among *villains;* nor do *they* feel easy when they see their old friend dressed out, in his grave, in the habiliments of a scoundrel. There is something to them in this mode of procedure on the part of the literary executor that does not chime in with their notions of "the true point of honor." They had all of them looked upon our departed friend as singularly indifferent to wealth for its own sake, but as very positive in his opinions that the scale of social merit was not of the highest; that mind, somehow, was apt to be left out of the estimate altogether; and, partaking somewhat of his free way of thinking, his friends are startled to find they have entertained very unamiable convictions. As to his "quick choler" when he was contradicted, it depended a good deal upon the party denying, as well as upon the subject discussed. He was quick, it is true, to perceive mere quacks in literature, and somewhat apt to be hasty when pestered with them; but upon most other questions his natural amiability was not easily disturbed. Upon a subject that he understood thoroughly, he felt some right to be positive, if not arrogant, when addressing pretenders. His "astonishing natural advantages" *had* been very assiduously cultivated; his "daring spirit" was the anointed of genius; his self-confidence the proud conviction of both; and it was with something of a lofty scorn that he *attacked,* as well as repelled, a crammed scholar of the hour, who attempted to palm upon him his ill-digested learning. Literature with him was religion; and he, its high priest, with a

whip of scorpions, scourged the money-changers from the temple. In all else, he had the docility and kind-heartedness of a child. No man was more quickly touched by a kindness, none more prompt to return for an injury. For three or four years I knew him intimately, and for eighteen months saw him almost daily, much of the time writing or conversing at the same desk, knowing all his hopes, his fears, and little annoyances of life, as well as his high-hearted struggle with adverse fate; yet he was always the same polished gentleman, the quiet, unobtrusive, thoughtful scholar, the devoted husband, frugal in his personal expenses, punctual and unwearied in his industry, *and the soul of honor* in all his transactions. This, of course, was in his better days, and by them *we* judge the man. But even after his habits had changed, there was no literary man to whom I would more readily advance money for labor to be done. He kept his accounts, small as they were, with the accuracy of a banker. I append an account sent to me in his own hand, long after he had left Philadelphia, and after all knowledge of the transactions it recited had escaped my memory. I had returned him the story of "The Gold Bug," at his own request, as he found that he could dispose of it very advantageously elsewhere:—

We were square when I sold you the "Versification" article, for which you gave me, first, $25, and afterwards $7—in all		$32 00
Then you bought "The Gold Bug" for		52 00
I got both these back, so that I owed		$84.00
You lent Mrs. Clemm		12 50
Making in all		$96 50
The review of "Flaccus" was 3 3-4 pp., which, at $4,is	$15 00	
Lowell's poem is	10 00	
The review of Channing, 4 pp., is $16, of which I got $6, leaving	10 00	
The review of Halleck, 4 pp., is $16, of which I got $10, leaving	6 00	
The review of Reynolds, 2 pp.	8 00	
The review of Longfellow, 5 pp., is $20, of which I got $10, leaving	10 00	
So that I have paid in all		59 00
Which leaves still due by me		$37 50

This, I find, was his uniform habit with others as well as myself, carefully recalling to mind his indebtedness with the fresh article sent. And this is the man who had "no moral susceptibility," and little or nothing of the "true point of honor." It may be a very plain business view of the question, but it strikes his friends that it may pass as something, as times go.

I shall never forget how solicitous of the happiness of his wife and mother-in-law he was whilst one of the editors of "*Graham's Magazine;*" his whole efforts seemed to be to procure the comfort and welfare of his home. Except for their happiness, and the natural ambition of having a magazine of his own, I never heard him deplore the want of wealth. The truth is, he cared little for money, and knew less of its value, for he seemed to have no personal expenses. What he received from me, in regular monthly instalments, went directly into the hands of his mother-in-law for family comforts, and *twice* only I remember his purchasing some rather expensive luxuries for his house, and then he was nervous to the degree of misery until he had, by extra articles, covered what he considered an imprudent indebtedness. His love for his wife was a sort of rapturous worship of the spirit of beauty which he felt was fading before his eyes. I have seen him hovering around her when she was ill, with all the fond fear and tender anxiety of a mother for her first-born, her slightest cough causing in him a shudder, a heart-chill that was visible. I rode out, one summer evening, with them, and the remembrance of his watchful eyes eagerly bent upon the slightest change of hue in that loved face haunts me yet as the memory of a sad strain. It was the hourly *anticipation* of her loss that made him a sad and thoughtful man, and lent a mournful melody to his undying song.

It is true, that later in life Poe had much of those morbid feelings which a life of poverty and disappointment is so apt to engender in the heart of man—the sense of having been ill-used, misunderstood, and put aside by men of far less ability, and of none, which preys upon the heart and clouds the brain of many a child of song. A consciousness of the inequalities of life, and of the abundant power of mere wealth, allied even to vulgarity, to override all distinctions, and to thrust itself, bedaubed with dirt and glittering with tinsel, into the high places of society, and the chief seats of the synagogue; whilst he, a worshipper of the beautiful and true, who listened to the voices of angels and held delighted companionship with them as the cold throng swept disdainfully by him, was often in danger of being thrust out, houseless, homeless, beggared, upon the world, with all his fine feelings strung to a tension of agony when he thought of his beautiful and delicate wife, dying hourly before his eyes. What wonder that he then poured out the vials of a long-treasured bitterness upon the injustice and hollowness of all society around him.

The very natural question "Why did he not work and thrive?" is easily answered. It will not be *asked* by the many who know the precarious tenure by which literary men hold a mere living in this country. The avenues through which they can profitably reach the country are few, and crowded with aspirants for bread, as well as fame. The unfortunate tendency to cheapen every literary work to the lowest point of beggarly flimsiness in price and profit, prevents even the well-disposed from extending anything like an adequate support to even a part of the great throng which genius, talent, education, and even misfortune, force into the struggle. The character of Poe's mind was of such an order as not to be very widely in demand. The class of educated mind which he could readily and profitably address was small—the channels through which he could do so at all were few—and publishers all, or nearly all, contented with such pens as were already engaged, hesitated to incur the expense of his to an extent which would sufficiently remunerate him; hence, when he was fairly at sea, connected permanently with no publication, he suffered all the horrors of prospective destitution, with scarcely the ability of providing for immediate necessities; and at such moments, alas! the tempter often came, and as you have truly said, "*one glass*" of wine made him a madman. Let the moralist, who stands upon "tufted carpet," and surveys his smoking board, the fruits of his individual toil or mercantile adventure, pause before he let the anathema, trembling upon his lips, fall upon a man like Poe, who, wandering from publisher to publisher, with his fine, print-like manuscript, scrupulously clean and neatly rolled, finds no market for his brain —with despair at heart, misery ahead, for himself and his loved ones, and gaunt famine dogging at his heels, thus sinks by the wayside, before the demon that watches his steps and whispers *oblivion*. Of all the miseries which God, or his own vices, inflict upon man, none are so terrible as that of having the strong and willing arm struck down to a childlike inefficiency, while the Heart and the Will have the purpose of a giant's out-doing. We must remember, too, that the very organization of such a mind as that of Poe—the very tension and tone of his exquisitely strung nerves —the passionate yearnings of his soul for the beautiful and true, utterly unfitted him for the rude jostlings and fierce competitorship of trade. The only drafts of his that could be honored were those upon his brain. The unpeopled air—the caverns of ocean—the decay and mystery that hang around old castles—the thunder

of wind through the forest aisles—the spirits that rode the blast, by all but him unseen, and the deep, metaphysical creations which floated through the chambers of his soul—were his only wealth, the High Change where only his signature was valid for rubies.

Could he have stepped down and chronciled small beer, made himself the shifting toady of the hour, and, with bow and cringe, hung upon the steps of greatness, sounding the glory of third-rate ability with a penny trumpet, he would have been feted alive, and *perhaps* been praised when dead. But, no! his views of the duty of the critic were stern, and he felt that in praising an unworthy writer he committed dishonor. His pen was regulated by the highest sense of *duty*. By a keen analysis he separated and studied each piece which the skilful mechanist had put together. No part, however insignificant or apparently unimportant, escaped the rigid and patient scrutiny of his sagacious mind. The unfitted joint proved the bungler—the slightest blemish was a palpable fraud. He was the scrutinizing lapidary, who detected and exposed the most minute flaw in diamonds. The gem of first water shone the brighter for the truthful setting of his calm praise. He had the finest touch of soul for beauty—a delicate and hearty appreciation of worth. If his praise appeared tardy, it was of priceless value when given. It was true as well as sincere. It was the stroke of honor that at once knighted the receiver. It was in the world of *mind* that he was king; and, with a fierce audacity, he felt and proclaimed himself autocrat. As critic, he was despotic, supreme. Yet no man with more readiness would soften a harsh expression at the request of a friend, or if he himself felt that he had infused too great a degree of bitterness into his article, none would more readily soften it down after it was in type—though still maintaining the justness of his critical views. I do not believe that he wrote to give pain; but in combating what he conceived to be error, he used the strongest word that presented itself, even in conversation. He labored not so much to reform as to *exterminate* error, and thought the shortest process was to pull it up by the roots.

He was a worshipper of *intellect*—longing to grasp the power of mind that moves the stars—to bathe his soul in the dreams of seraphs. He was himself all ethereal, of a fine essence, that moved in an atmosphere of spirits,of spiritual beauty, overflowing and radiant—twin-brother with the angels, feeling their flashing wings upon his heart, and almost clasping them in his embrace. Of them,

and as an expectant archangel of that high order of intellect, stepping out of himself, as it were, and interpreting the time he revelled in delicious luxury in a world beyond, with an audacity which we fear in madmen, but in genius worship as the inspiration of heaven.

But my object, in throwing together a few thoughts upon the chracter of Edgar Allan Poe, was not to attempt an elaborate criticism, but to say what might palliate grave faults that have been attributed to him and to meet by facts unjust accusation; in a word, to give a mere outline of the man as he lived before me. I think I am warranted in saying to Mr Griswold that he must review his decision. It will not stand the calm scrutiny of his own judgment, or of time, while it must be regarded by all the friends of Mr. Poe as an ill-judged and misplaced calumny upon that gifted son of genius.

Yours truly,

Geo. R. Graham.

Philadelphia, February 2, 1850.

To N. P. Willis, Esq.

APPENDIX C

GRISWOLD'S "MEMOIR" OF POE PUBLISHED IN "THE LITERATI," THE THIRD VOLUME OF POE'S COMPLETE WORKS, WITH "PREFACE"

NOTE: Regarding the following letters Griswold asserts Poe wrote him, and that he published as proof of their friendship, Woodbury, who edited the Poe-Griswold MSS. states: "Of these letters two originals only were among the Griswold MSS. and both varied materially from the printed text."

PREFACE

Hitherto I have not written or published a syllable upon the subject of Mr. Poe's life, character, or genius, since I was informed, some ten days after his death, of my appointment to be his literary executor. I did not suppose I was debarred from the expression of any feelings or opinions in the case by the acceptance of this office, the duties of which I regarded as simply the collection of his works, and their publication, for the benefit of the rightful inheritors of his property, in a form and manner that would probably have been most agreeable to his own wishes. I would gladly have declined a trust imposing so much labor, for I had been compelled by ill health to solicit the indulgence of my publishers, who had many thousand dollars invested in an unfinished work under my direction; but when I was told by several of Mr. Poe's most intimate friends—among others by the family of S. D. Lewis, Esq., to whom in his last years he was under greater obligations than to any or to all others—that he had long been in the habit of expressing a desire that in the event of his death I should be his editor, I yielded to the apparent necessity, and proceeded immediately with the preparation of the two volumes which have heretofore been published. But I had, at the request of the Editor of "The Tribune," written hastily a few paragraphs about Mr. Poe, which appeared in that paper with the telegraphic communication of his death; and two or three of these paragraphs having been quoted by Mr. N. P. Willis, in his Notice of Mr. Poe, were as a part of that Notice unavoidably reprinted in the volume of the deceased author's Tales. And my unconsidered and imperfect, but, as every one who knew its subject readily perceived, very kind article, was now vehemently attacked. A writer under the signature of "George R. Graham," in a sophomorical and trashy but widely circulated Letter, denounced it as "the fancy sketch of a jaundiced vision," "an immortal infamy," and its composition a "*breach of trust.*" And to excuse his five months' silence, and to induce a belief that he did not know that what I had written was already published *before I could have been advised that I was to be Mr. Poe's executor,* (a condition upon which all the possible force of his Letter depends,) this silly and ambitious person, while represented as enter-

taining a friendship really passionate in its tenderness for the poor author, (of whom in four years of his extremest poverty he had not purchased for his magazine a single line,) is made to say that in *half a year* he had not seen so noticeable an article,—though within a week after Mr. Poe's death it appeared in *The Tribune*, in *The Home Journal*, in three of the daily papers of his own city, and in *The Saturday Evening Post*, of which he was or had been himself one of the chief proprietors and editors! And Mr. John Neal, too, who had never had even the slightest personal acquaintance with Poe in his life, rushes from a sleep which the public had trusted was eternal, to declare that my characterization of Poe (which he is pleased to describe as "poetry, exalted poetry, poetry of astonishing and original strength") is false and malicious, and that I am a "caluminiator," a "Rhadamanthus," etc. Both these writers—John Neal following the author of the Letter signed "George R. Graham"—not only assume what I have shown to be false, (that the remarks on Poe's character were written by me *as his executor*,) but that there was a long, intense, and implacable enmity betwixt Poe and myself, which disqualified me for the office of his biographer. This scarcely needs an answer after the poet's dying request that I should be his editor; but the manner in which it has been urged, will, I trust, be a sufficient excuse for the following demonstration of its absurdity.

My acquaintance with Mr. Poe commenced in the spring of 1841. He called at my hotel, and not finding me at home, left two letters of introduction. The next morning I visited him, and we had a long conversation about literature and literary men, pertinent to the subject of a book, "The Poets and Poetry of America," which I was then preparing for the press. The following letter was sent to me a few days afterwards:

Philadelphia, March 29.

R. W. Griswold, Esq.: My Dear Sir:—On the other leaf I send such poems as I think my best, from which you can select any which please your fancy. I should be proud to see one or two of them in your book. The one called "The Haunted Palace" is that of which I spoke in reference to Professor Longfellow's plagiarism. I first published the "H. P." in Brooks's "Museum," a monthly journal at Baltimore, now dead. Afterwards, I embodied it in a tale called "The House of Usher," in Burton's magazine. Here it was, I suppose, that Professor Longfellow saw it; for, about six weeks afterwards, there appeared in the "Southern Literary Messenger" a poem by him called "The Beleaguered City," which may now be found in his volume. The identity in title is striking; for by "The Haunted Palace" I mean to imply a mind haunted by phantoms—a disordered brain—and by the "Beleaguered City" Prof. L. means just the same. But the whole tournure of the poem is based upon mine, as you will see at once. Its allegorical conduct, the style of its versification and expression—all are mine. As I understood you to say that you meant to preface each set of poems by some biographical notice, I have ventured to send you the above memoranda—the particulars of which (in a case where an author is so little known as myself) might not be easily obtained elsewhere. "The Coliseum" was the prize poem alluded to.

With high respect and esteem, I am your obedient servant,

Edgar A. Poe.

The next is without date:

My Dear Sir —I made use of your name with Carey & Hart, for a copy of your book, and am writing a review of it, which I shall send to Lowell for "The Pioneer."

I like it decidedly. It is of immense importance, as a guide to what we have done; but you have permitted your good nature to influence you to a degree: I would have omitted at least a dozen whom you have quoted, and I can think of five or six that should have been in. But with all its faults—you see I am perfectly frank with you—it is a better book than any other man in the United States could have made of the materials. This I will say.

With high respect, I am your obedient servant,

Edgar A. Poe.

The next refers to some pecuniary matters:

Philadelphia, June 11, 1843.

Dear Griswold:—Can you not send me $5. I am sick, and Virginia is almost gone. Come and see me. Peterson says you suspect me of a curious anonymous letter. I did not write it, but bring it along with you when you make the visit you promised to Mrs. Clemm. I will try to fix that matter soon. Could you do anything with my *note*?

Yours truly, E. A. P.

We had no further correspondence for more than a year. In this period he delivered a lecture upon "The Poets and Poetry of America," in which my book under that title was, I believe, very sharply reviewed. In the meantime advertisement was made of my intention to publish "The Prose Writers of America," and I received, one day, just as I was leaving Philadelphia for New-York, the following letter:

New-York, Jan. 10, 1845.

Rev. Rufus W. Griswold: Sir—I perceive by a paragraph in the papers, that your "Prose Writers of America" is in press. Unless your opinions of my literary character are entirely changed, you will, I think, like something of mine, and you are welcome to whatever best pleases you, if you will permit me to furnish a corrected copy; but with your present feelings you can hardly do me justice in any criticism, and I shall be glad if you will simply say after my name: "Born 1811; published Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque in 1839; has resided latterly in New-York." Your obedient servant, Edgar A. Poe.

I find my answer to this among his papers:

Philadelpnia, Jan. 11, 1845.

Sir:—Although I have some cause of quarrel with you, as you seem to remember, I do not under any circumstances permit, as you have repeatedly charged, my personal relations to influence the expression of my opinions as a critic. By the inclosed proof-sheets of what I had written before the reception of your note, you will see that I think quite as well of your works as I did when I had the pleasure of being Your friend, R. W. Griswold.

This was not mailed until the next morning; I however left Philadelphia the same evening, and in the course of the following day Poe and myself met in the office of "The Tribune," but without any recognition. Soon after he received my note, he sent the following to my hotel:

New-York, Jan. 16, 1845.

Dear Griswold—If you will permit me to call you so—your letter occasioned me first pain and then pleasure: pain, because it gave me to see that I had lost, through

my own folly, an honorable friend;—pleasure, because I saw in it a hope of reconciliation. I have been aware, for several weeks, that my reasons for speaking of your book as I did (of *yourself* I have always spoken kindly), were based in the malignant slanders of a mischief-maker by profession. Still, as I supposed you irreparably offended, I could make no advances when we met at the "Tribune" office, although I longed to do so. I know of nothing which would give me more sincere pleasure than your accepting these apologies, and meeting me as a friend. If you *can* do this, and forget the past, let me know where I shall call on you—or come and see me at the "Mirror" office, any morning about ten. We can then talk over the other matters, which, to me at least, are far less important than your good will. Very truly yours, Edgar A. Poe.

His next letter is dated February 24, 1845:

My dear Griswold:—A thousand thanks for your kindness in the matter of those books, which I could not afford to buy, and had so much need of. Soon after seeing you, I sent you, through Zieber, all my poems worth republishing, and I presume they reached you. I was sincerely delighted with what you said of them, and if you will write your criticism in the form of a preface, I shall be greatly obliged to you. I say this not because you praised me; everybody praises me now: but because you so perfectly understand me, or what I have aimed at, in all my poems; I did not think you had so much delicacy of appreciation joined with your strong sense; I can say truly that no man's approbation gives me so much pleasure. I send you with this another package, also through Zieber, by Burgess & Stringer. It contains, in the way of essay, "Mesmeric Revelation," which I would like to have go in, even if you have to omit the "House of Usher." I send also corrected copies of (in the way of funny criticism, but you don't like this) "Flaccus," which conveys a tolerable idea of my style; and of my serious manner "Barnaby Rudge" is a good specimen. In the tale line, "The Murders of the Rue Morgue," "The Gold Bug," and "The Man that was Used Up,"—far more than enough, but you can select to suit yourself. I prefer the "G. B." to the "M. in the R. M." I have taken a third interest in the "Broadway Journal," and will be glad if you could send me anything for it. Why not let me anticipate the book publication of your splendid essay on Milton?

Truly yours, Poe.

The next is without date:

Dear Griswold:—I return the proofs with many thanks for your attentions. The poems look quite as well in the short metres as in the long ones, and I am quite content as it is. In "The Sleeper" you have "Forever with unclosed eye" for "Forever with unopen'd eye." Is it possible to make the correction? I presume you understand that in the repetition of my Lecture on the Poets, (in N.Y.) I left out *all* that was offensive to yourself. I am ashamed of myself that I ever said anything of you that was so unfriendly or so unjust; but what I *did* say I am confident has been misrepresented to you. See my notice of C. F. Hoffman's (?) sketch of you. Very sincerely yours, Poe.

On the twenty-sixth of October, 1845, he wrote:

My dear Griswold:—*Will* you aid me at a pinch—at one of the greatest pinches conceivable? If you will, I will be indebted to you for life. After a prodigious deal of manoeuvering, I have succeeded in getting the "Broadway Journal" entirely

within my own control. It will be a fortune to me if I can hold it—and I can do it easily with a very trifling aid from my friends. May I count you as one? Lend me $50, and you shall never have cause to regret it. Truly yours, Edgar A. Poe.

And on the first of November:

My dear Griswold:—Thank you for the $25. And since you will allow me to draw upon you for the other half of what I asked, if it shall be needed at the end of a month, I am just as grateful as if it were all in hand,—for my friends here have acted generously by me. Don't have any more doubts of my success. I am, by the way, preparing an article about you for the B. J., in which I do you justice—which is all *you* can ask of any one. Ever truly yours, Edgar A. Poe.

The next is without date, but appears to have been written early in 1849:

Dear Griswold:—Your uniform kindness leads me to hope that you will attend to this little matter of Mrs. L——, to whom I truly think you have done less than justice. I am ashamed to ask favors of you, to whom I am so much indebted, but I have promised Mrs. L—— this. They lied to you, (if you told —— what he says you told him,) upon the subject of my forgotten Lecture on the American Poets, and I take this opportunity to say that what I have always held in conversations about you, and what I believe to be entirely true, as far as it goes, is contained in my notice of your "Female Poets of America," in the forthcoming "Southern Literary Messenger." By glancing at what I have published about you, (Aut. in Graham, 1841; Review in Pioneer, 1843; notice in B. Journal, 1845; Letter in Int., 1847; and the Review of your Female Poets,) you will see that I have never hazarded my own reputation by a disrespectful word of you, though there were, as I long ago explained, in consequence of ——'s false imputation of that beastly article to you, some absurd jokes at your expense in the Lecture at Philadelphia. Come up and see me: the cars pass within a few rods of the New-York Hotel, where I have called two or three times without finding you in.

Yours truly, Poe.

I soon after visited him at Fordham, and passed two or three hours with him. The only letter he afterward sent me—at least the only one now in my possession —follows:

Dear Griswold—I inclose perfect copies of the lines "For Annie" and "Annabel Lee," in hopes that you may make room for them in your new edition. As regards "Lenore," (which you were kind enough to say you would insert,) I would prefer the concluding stanza to run as here written. . . . It is a point of no great importance, but in one of your editions you have given my sister's age instead of mine. I was born in Dec. 1813; my sister, Jan. 1811. [The date of his birth to which he refers was printed from his statement in the memoranda referred to in the first of the letters here printed.—R. W. G.] Willis, whose good opinion I value highly, and of whose good word I have a right to be proud, has done me the honor to speak very pointedly in praise of "The Raven." I inclose what he said, and if you could contrive to introduce it, you would render me an essential favor, and greatly further my literary interests, at a point where I am most anxious they should be advanced. Truly yours, E. A. Poe.

P. S.—Considering my indebtedness to you, can you not sell to Graham or to

Godey (with whom, you know, I cannot with the least self-respect again have anything to do directly)—can you not sell to one of these men, "Annabel Lee," say for $50, and credit me that sum. Either of them could print it before you will need it for your book. *Mem.* The Eveleth you ask about is a Yankee impertinent, who, knowing my extreme poverty, has for years pestered me with unpaid letters; but I believe almost every literary man of any note has suffered in the same way. I am surprised that you have escaped. Poe.

These are all the letters (unless I have given away some notes of his to autograph collectors) ever received by me from Mr. Poe. They are a sufficient answer to the article by John Neal, and to that under the signature of "George R. Graham," which have induced their publication. I did not undertake to dispose of the poem of "Annabel Lee," but upon the death of the author quoted it in the notice of him in *The Tribune*, and I was sorry to learn soon after that it had been purchased and paid for by the proprietors of both *Sartain's Magazine*, and *The Southern Literary Messenger*.

New York, September 2, 1850. R.W.G.

MEMOIR

The family of Edgar A. Poe was one of the oldest and most reputable in Baltimore. David Poe, his paternal grandfather, was a Quartermaster-General in the Maryland line during the Revolution, and the intimate friend of Lafayette, who, during his last visit to the United States, called personally upon the General's widow, and tendered her acknowledgments for the services rendered to him by her husband. His great-grandfather, John Poe, married in England, Jane, a daughter of Admiral James McBride, noted in British naval history, and claiming kindred with some of the most illustrious English families. His father, David Poe, Jr., the fourth son of the Quartermaster-General, was several years a law student in Baltimore, but becoming enamored of an English actress, named Elizabeth Arnold, whose prettiness and vivacity more than her genius for the stage made her a favorite, he eloped with her, and after a short period, having married her, became himself an actor. They continued six or seven years in the theatres of the principal cities, and finally died, within a few weeks of each other, in Richmond, leaving three children, Henry, Edgar, and Rosalie, in utter destitution.

Edgar Poe, who was born in Baltimore, in January, 1811, was at this period of remarkable beauty, and precocious wit. Mr. John Allan, a merchant of large fortune and liberal disposition, who had been intimate with his parents, having no children of his own, adopted him, and it was generally understood among his acquaintances that

he intended to make him the heir of his estate. The proud, nervous irritability of the boy's nature was fostered by his guardian's well-meant but ill-judged indulgence. Nothing was permitted which could "break his spirit." He must be the master of his masters, or not have any. An eminent and most estimable gentleman of Richmond has written to me, that when Poe was only six or seven years of age, he went to a school kept by a widow of excellent character, to whom was committed the instruction of the children of some of the principal families in the city. A portion of the grounds was used for the cultivation of vegetables, and its invasion by her pupils strictly forbidden. A trespasser, if discovered, was commonly made to wear, during school hours, a turnip or carrot, or something of this sort, attached to his neck as a sign of disgrace. On one occasion Poe, having violated the rules, was decorated with the promised badge, which he wore in sullenness until the dismissal of the boys, when, that the full extent of his wrong might be understood by his patron, of whose sympathy he was confident, he eluded the notice of the schoolmistress, who would have relieved him of his esculent, and made the best of his way home, with it dangling at his neck. Mr. Allan's anger was aroused, and he proceeded instantly to the school-room, and after lecturing the astonished dame upon the enormity of such an insult to his son and to himself, demanded his account, determined that the child should not again be subjected to such tyranny. Who can estimate the effect of this puerile triumph upon the growth of that morbid self-esteem which characterized the author in after life?

In 1816, he accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Allan to Great Britain, visited the most interesting portions of the country, and afterwards passed four or five years in a school kept at Stoke Newington, near London, by the Rev. Dr. Bransby. In his tale, entitled "William Wilson," he has introduced a striking description of this school and of his life here. He says:

"My earliest recollections of a school life are connected with a large, rambling, Elizabethan house, in a misty-looking village of England, where were a vast number of gigantic and gnarled trees, and where all the houses were excessively ancient. In truth, it was a dream-like and spirit-soothing place, that venerable old town. At this moment, in fancy, I feel the refreshing chilliness of its deeply shadowed avenues, inhale the fragrance of its thousand shrubberies, and thrill anew with undefinable delight, at the deep hollow note of the church-bell, breaking, each hour, with sullen and sudden roar, upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere in which the fretted Gothic steeple lay embedded and asleep. It gives me, perhaps, as much of pleasure as I can now in any manner experience, to dwell upon minute recollections of the school and its concerns. Steeped in

misery as I am—misery, alas! only too real—I shall be pardoned for seeking relief, however slight and temporary, in the weakness of a few rambling details. These, moreover, utterly trivial, and even ridiculous in themselves, assume, to my fancy, adventitious importance, as connected with a period and a locality when and where I recognize the first ambiguous monitions of the destiny which afterwards so fully overshadowed me. Let me then remember. The house, I have said, was old and irregular. The grounds were extensive, and a high and solid brick wall, topped with a bed of mortar and broken glass, encompassed the whole. The prison-like rampart formed the limit of our domain; beyond it we saw but thrice a week—once every Saturday afternoon, when, attended by two ushers, we were permitted to take brief walks in a body through some of the neighboring fields—and twice during Sunday, when we were paraded in the same formal manner to the morning and evening service in the one church of the village. Of this church the principal of our school was pastor. With how deep a spirit of wonder and perplexity was I wont to regard him from our remote pew in the gallery, as, with step solemn and slow, he ascended the pulpit! This reverend man, with countenance so demurely benign, with robes so glossy and so clerically flowing, with wig so minutely powdered, so rigid and so vast,—could this be he who, of late, with sour visage, and in snuffy habiliments, administered, ferule in hand, the Draconian Laws of the academy. Oh, gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution! At an angle of the ponderous wall frowned a more ponderous gate. It was riveted and studded with iron bolts, and surmounted with jagged iron spikes. What impressions of deep awe did it inspire! It was never opened save for the three periodical egressions and ingressions already mentioned; then, in every creak of its mighty hinges, we found a plenitude of mystery —a world of matter for solemn remark, or for more solemn meditation. The extensive enclosure was irregular in form, having many capacious recesses. Of these, three or four of the largest constituted the play ground. It was level, and covered with fine gravel. I well remember it had no trees, nor benches, nor anything similar within it. Of course it was in the rear of the house. In front lay a small parterre, planted with box and other shrubs; but through this sacred division we passed only upon rare occasions indeed—such as a first advent to school or final departure thence, or perhaps, when a parent or friend having called for us, we joyfully took our way home for the Christmas or Midsummer holidays. But the house!—how quaint an old building was this!—to me how veritably a palace of enchantment! There was really no end to its windings—to its incomprehensible subdivisions. It was difficult at any given time, to say with certainty upon which of its two stories one happened to be. From each room to every other there were sure to be found three or four steps either in ascent or descent. Then the lateral branches were innumerable—inconceivable—and so returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not very far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. During the five years of my residence here, I was never able to ascertain with precision, in what remote locality lay the little sleeping apartment assigned to myself and some eighteen or twenty other scholars. The school room was the largest in the house—I could not help thinking, in the world. It was very long, narrow, and dismally low, with pointed Gothic windows and a ceiling of oak. In a remote and terror-inspiring angle was a square enclosure of eight or ten feet, comprising the *sanctum*, 'during hours,' of our principal, the Reverend Dr.

Bramsby. It was a solid structure, with massy doors, sooner than open which in the absence of the 'Dominie,' we would all have willingly perished by the *peine forte et dure*. In other angles were two other similar boxes, far less reverenced, indeed, but still greatly matters of awe. One of these was the pulpit of the 'classical' usher, one of the 'English and mathematical.' Interspersed about the room, crossing and recrossing in endless irregularity, were innumerable benches and desks, black, ancient, and time-worn, piled desperately with much-bethumbed books, and so beseamed with initial letters, names at full length, grotesque figures, and other multiplied efforts of the knife, as to have entirely lost what little of original form might have been their portion in days long departed. A huge bucket with water stood at one extremity of the room, and a clock of stupendous dimensions at the other.

"Encompassed by the massy walls of this venerable academy, I passed yet not in tedium or disgust, the years of the third lustrum of my life. The teeming brain of childhood requires no external world of incident to occupy or amuse it; and the apparently dismal monotony of a school was replete with more intense excitement than my riper youth has derived from luxury, or my full manhood from crime. Yet I must believe that my first mental development had in it much of the uncommon—even much of the *outre*. Upon mankind at large the events of very early existence rarely leave in mature age any definite impression. All is gray shadow—a weak and irregular remembrance—an indistinct regathering of feeble pleasures and phantasmagoric pains. With me this is not so. In childhood I must have felt with the energy of a man what I now find stamped upon memory in lines as vivid, as deep, and as durable as the *exergues* of the Carthaginian medals. Yet in fact—in the fact of the world's view—how little was there to remember. The morning's awakening, the nightly summons to bed; the connings, the recitations; the periodical half-holidays and perambulations; the play-ground, with its broils, its pastimes, its intrigues; these, by a mental sorcery long forgotten, were made to involve a wilderness of sensation, a world of rich incident, an universe of varied emotion, of excitement the most passionate and spirit-stirring. "*Oh, le bon temps, que ce siecle de fer!*"

In 1822, he returned to the United States, and after passing a few months at an Academy in Richmond, he entered the University at Charlottesville, where he led a very dissipated life; the manners which then prevailed there were extremely dissolute, and he was known as the wildest and most reckless student of his class; but his unusual opportunities, and the remarkable ease with which he mastered the most difficult studies, kept him all the while in the first rank for scholarship, and he would have graduated with the highest honors, had not his gambling, intemperance, and other vices, induced his expulsion from the university.

At this period he was noted for feats of hardihood, strength and activity, and on one occasion, in a hot day of June, he swam from Richmond to Warwick, seven miles and a half, against a tide running

probably from two to three miles an hour.* He was expert at fence, had some skill in drawing, and was a ready and eloquent conversationist and declaimer.

His allowance of money while at Charlottesville had been liberal, but he quitted the place very much in debt, and when Mr. Allan refused to accept some of the drafts with which he had paid losses in gaming, he wrote to him an abusive letter, quitted his house, and soon after left the country with the Quixotic intention of joining the Greeks, then in the midst of their struggle with the Turks. He never reached his destination, and we know but little of his adventures in Europe for nearly a year. By the end of this time he had made his way to St. Petersburgh, and our Minister in that capital, the late Mr. Henry Middleton, of South Carolina, was summoned one morning to save him from penalties incurred in a drunken debauch. Through Mr. Middleton's kindness he was set at liberty and enabled to return to this country.

His meeting with Mr. Allan was not very cordial, but that gentleman declared himself willing to serve him in any way that should seem judicious; and when Poe expressed some anxiety to enter the Military Academy, he induced Chief Justice Marshall, Andrew Stevenson, General Scott, and other eminent persons, to sign an application which secured his appointment to a scholarship in that institution.

Mrs. Allan, whom Poe appears to have regarded with much affection, and who had more influence over him than any one else at this period, died on the twenty-seventh of February, 1829, which I believe was just before Poe left Richmond for West Point. It has been erroneously stated by all Poe's biographers, that Mr. Allan was now sixty-five years of age, and that Miss Paterson, to whom he was married afterward, was young enough to be his grand-daughter. Mr. Allan was in his forty-eighth year, and the difference between his age and that of his second wife was not so great as justly to attract any observation.

*This statement was first printed during Mr. Poe's life-time, and its truth being questioned in some of the journals, the following certificate was published by a distinguished gentlemen of Virginia:

"I was one of several who witnessed this swimming feat. We accompanied Mr. Poe in boats. Messrs. Robert Stannard, John Lyle, (since dead) Robert Saunders, John Munford, I think, and one or two others, were also of the party. Mr. P. did not seem at all fatigued, and *walked* back to Richmond immediately after the feat—which was undertaken for a wager. "Robert G. Cabell."

For a few weeks the cadet applied himself with much assiduity to his studies, and he became at once a favorite with his mess and with the officers and professors of the Academy; but his habits of dissipation were renewed; he neglected his duties and disobeyed orders; and in ten months from his matriculation he was cashiered.

He went again to Richmond, and was received into the family of Mr. Allan, who was disposed still to be his friend, and in the event of his good behavior to treat him as a son; but it soon became necessary to close his doors against him forever. According to Poe's own statement he ridiculed the marriage of his patron with Miss Paterson, and had a quarrel with her; but a different story,*scarcely suitable for repetition here, was told by the friends of the other party. Whatever the circumstances, they parted in anger, and Mr. Allan from that time declined to see or in any way to assist him. Mr. Allan died in the spring of 1834, in the fifty-fourth year of his age, leaving three children to share his property, of which not a mill was bequeathed to Poe.

Soon after he left West Point, Poe had printed at Baltimore a small volume of verses, ("Al Aaraaf," of about four hundred lines, "Tamerlane," of about three hundred lines, with smaller pieces,) and the favorable manner in which it was commonly referred to confirmed his belief that he might succeed in the profession of literature. The contents of the book appear to have been written when he was between sixteen and nineteen years of age; but though they illustrated the character of his abilities and justified his anticipations of success, they do not seem to me to evince, all things considered, a very remarkable precocity. The late Madame d'Ossoli refers to some of them as the productions of a boy of eight or ten years, but I believe there

*The writer of an eulogium upon the life and genius of Mr. Poe, in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, for March, 1850, thus refers to this point in his history:

"The story of the other side is different; and if true, throws a dark shade upon the quarrel, and a very ugly light upon Poe's character. We shall not insert it, because it is one of those relations which we think with Sir Thomas Browne, should never be recorded,—being "verities whose truth we fear and heartily wish there were no truth therein . . . . whose relations honest minds do deprecate. For of sins heteroclital, and such as want name or precedent, there is oft-times a sin even in their history. We desire no record of enormities: sins should be accounted new. They omit of their monstrosity as they fall from their rarity; for men count it venial to err with their forefathers, and foolishly conceive they divide a sin in its society. . . . . In things of this nature, silence commendeth history: 'tis the veniable part of things lost; wherein there must never arise a Pancirollus, nor remain any register but that of hell."

is no evidence that anything of his which has been published was written before he left the university. Certainly, it was his habit so constantly to labor upon what he had produced—he was at all times so anxious and industrious in revision—that his works, whenever first composed, displayed the perfection of his powers at the time when they were given to the press.

His contributions to the journals attracted little attention, and his hopes of gaining a living in this way being disappointed, he enlisted in the army as a private soldier. How long he remained in the service I have not been able to ascertain. He was recognised by officers who had known him at West Point, and efforts were made, privately, but with prospects of success, to obtain for him a commission, when it was discovered by his friends that he had deserted.

He had probably found relief from the monotony of a soldier's life in literary composition. His mind was never in repose, and without some such resort the dull routine of the camp or barracks would have been insupportable. When he next appears, he has a volume of MS. stories, which he desires to print under the title of "Tales of the Folio Club." An offer by the proprietor of the Baltimore "Saturday Visiter," of two prizes, one for the best tale and one for the best poem, induced him to submit the pieces entitled "MS. found in a Bottle," "Lionizing," "The Visionary," and three others, with "The Coliseum," a poem, to the committee, which consisted of Mr. John P. Kennedy, the author of "Horse Shoe Robinson," Mr. J. H. B. Latrobe, and Dr. James H. Miller. Such matters are usually disposed of in a very offhand way: Committees to award literary prizes drink to the payer's health in good wines, over unexamined MSS., which they submit to the discretion of publishers with permission to use their names in such a way as to promote the publishers' advantage. So perhaps it would have been in this case, but that one of the committee, taking up a little book remarkably beautiful and distinct in caligraphy, was tempted to read several pages; and becoming interested, he summoned the attention of the company to the half-dozen compositions it contained. It was unanimously decided that the prizes should be paid to "the first of geniuses who had written legibly." Not another MS. was unfolded. Immediately the "confidential envelope" was opened, and the successful competitor was found to bear the scarcely known name of Poe. The committee indeed awarded to him the premiums for both the tale and the poem, but subsequently altered their decision, so as to exclude him from the second premium, in consideration of his having obtained the higher one. The prize

tale was the "MS. found in a Bottle." This award was published on the twelfth of October, 1833. The next day the publisher called to see Mr. Kennedy, and gave him an account of the author, which excited his curiosity and sympathy, and caused him to request that he should be brought to his office. Accordingly he was introduced; the prize-money had not yet been paid, and he was in the costume in which he had answered the advertisement of his good fortune. Thin, and pale even to ghastliness, his whole appearance indicated sickness and the utmost destitution. A well-worn frock coat concealed the absence of a shirt, and imperfect boots disclosed the want of hose. But the eyes of the young man were luminous with intelligence and feeling, and his voice and conversation and manners all won upon the lawyer's regard. Poe told his history, and his ambition, and it was determined that he should not want means for a suitable appearance in society, nor opportunity for a just display of his abilities in literature. Mr. Kennedy accompanied him to a clothing store, and purchased for him a respectable suit, with changes of linen, and sent him to a bath, from which he returned with the suddenly regained style of a gentleman.

His new friends were very kind to him, and availed themselves of every opportunity to serve him. Near the close of the year 1834 the late Mr. T. W. White established in Richmond the "Southern Literary Messenger." He was a man of much simplicity, purity and energy of character, but not a writer, and he frequently solicited of his acquaintances literary assistance. On receiving from him an application for an article, early in 1835, Mr. Kennedy, who was busy with the duties of his profession, advised Poe to send one, and in a few weeks he had occasion to enclose the following answer to a letter from Mr. White.

"Baltimore, April 13, 1835.

"*Dear Sir:* Poe did right in referring to me. He is very clever with his pen—classical and scholarlike. He wants experience and direction, but I have no doubt he can be made very useful to you. And, poor fellow! he is *very* poor. I told him to write something for every number of your magazine, and that you might find it to your advantage to give him some permanent employ. He has a volume of very bizarre tales in the hands of ——, in Philadelphia, who for a year past has been promising to publish them. This young fellow is highly imaginative, and a little given to the *terrific*. He is at work upon a tragedy, but I have turned him to drudging upon whatever may make money, and I have no doubt you and he will find your account in each other."

In the next number of the "Messenger" Mr. White announced that Poe was its editor, or in other words, that he had made arrangements

with a gentleman of approved literary taste and attainments to whose especial management the editorial department would be confided, and it was declared that this gentleman would "devote his exclusive attention to the work." Poe continued, however, to reside in Baltimore, and it is probable that he was engaged only as a general contributor and a writer of critical notices of books. In a letter to Mr. White, under the date of the thirtieth of May, he says:

"In regard to my critique of Mr. Kennedy's novel I seriously feel ashamed of what I have written. I fully intended to give the work a thorough review, and examine it in detail. Ill health alone prevented me from so doing. At the time I made the hasty sketch I sent you, I was so ill as to be hardly able to see the paper on which I wrote, and I finished it in a state of complete exhaustion. I have not, therefore, done anything like justice to the book, and I am vexed about the matter, for Mr. Kennedy has proved himself a kind friend to me in every respect, and I am sincerely grateful to him for many acts of generosity and attention. You ask me if I am perfectly satisfied with your course. I reply that I am—entirely. My poor services are not worth what you give me for them."

About a month afterward he wrote:

"You ask me if I would be willing to come on to Richmond if you should have occasion for my services during the coming winter. I reply that nothing would give me greater pleasure. I have been desirous for some time past of paying a visit to Richmond, and would be glad of any reasonable excuse for so doing. Indeed I am anxious to settle myself in that city, and if, by any chance, you hear of a situation likely to suit me, I would gladly accept it, were the salary even the merest trifle. I should, indeed, feel myself greatly indebted to you if through your means I could accomplish this object. What you say in the conclusion of your letter, in relation to the supervision of proof-sheets, gives me reason to hope that possibly you might find something for me to do in your office. If so, I should be very glad—for at present only a very small portion of my time is employed."

He continued in Baltimore till September. In this period he wrote several long reviewals, which for the most part were rather abstracts of works than critical discussions, and published with others, "Hans Pfaall," a story in some respects very similar to Mr. Locke's celebrated account of Herschell's Discoveries in the Moon. At first he appears to have been ill satisfied with Richmond, or with his duties, for in two or three weeks after his removal to that city we find Mr. Kennedy writing to him:

"I am sorry to see you in such plight as your letter shows you in. It is strange that just at this time, when everybody is praising you, and when fortune is beginning to smile upon your hitherto wretched circumstances, you should be invaded by these blue devils. It belongs, however, to your age and temper to be

thus buffeted—but be assured, it only wants a little resolution to master the adversary forever. You will doubtless do well henceforth in literature, and add to your *comforts* as well as to your reputation, which it gives me great pleasure to assure you is everywhere rising in popular esteem."

But he could not bear his good fortune. On receiving a month's salary he gave himself up to habits which only necessity had restrained at Baltimore. For a week he was in a condition of brutish drunkenness, and Mr. White dismissed him. When he became sober, however, he had no resource but in reconciliation, and he wrote letters and induced acquaintances to call upon Mr. White with professions of repentance and promises of reformation. With his usual considerate and judicious kindness that gentleman answered him:

"*My dear Edgar:* I cannot address you in such language as this occasion and my feelings demand: I must be content to speak to you in my plain way. That you are sincere in all your promises I firmly believe. But when you once again tread these streets, I have my fears that your resolutions will fail, and that you will again drink till your senses are lost. If you rely on your strength you are gone. Unless you look to your Maker for help you will not be safe. How much I regretted parting from you is known to Him only and myself. I had become attached to you; I am still; and I would willingly say return, did not a knowledge of your past life make me dread a speedy renewal of our separation. If you would make yourself contented with quarters in my house, or with any other private family, where liquor is not used, I should think there was some hope for you. But, if you go to a tavern, or to any place where it is used at table, you are not safe. You have fine talents, Edgar, and you ought to have them respected, as well as yourself. Learn to respect yourself, and you will soon find that you are respected. Separate yourself from the bottle, and from bottle companions, forever. Tell me if you can and will do so. If you again become an assistant in my office, it must be understood that all engagements on my part cease the moment you get drunk. I am your true friend. T. W. W."

A new contract was arranged, but Poe's irregularities frequently interrupted the kindness and finally exhausted the patience of his generous though methodical employer, and in the number of the "Messenger" for January, 1837, he thus took leave of its readers:

"*Mr. Poe's* attention being called in another direction, he will decline, with the present number, the editorial duties of the *Messenger*. His Critical Notices for this month end with Professor Anthon's Cicero—what follows is from another hand. With the best wishes to the magazine, and to its few foes as well as many friends, he is now desirous of bidding all parties a peaceful farewell."

While in Richmond, with an income of but five hundred dollars a year, he had married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, a very amiable and lovely girl, who was as poor as himself, and little fitted, except by her

gentle temper, to be the wife of such a person. He went from Richmond to Baltimore, and after a short time, to Philadelphia, and to New York. A slight acquaintance with Dr. Hawks had led that acute and powerful writer to invite his contributions to the "New York Review," and he had furnished for the second number of it (for October, 1837) an elaborate but not very remarkable article upon Stephen's then recently published "Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petrea, and the Holy Land." His abilities were not of the kind demanded for such a work, and he never wrote another paper for this or for any other Review of the same class. He had commenced in the "Literary Messenger," a story of the sea, under the title of "Arthur Gordon Pym,"* and upon the recommendation of Mr. Paulding and others, it was printed by the Harpers. It is his longest work, and is not without some sort of merit, but it received little attention. The publishers sent one hundred copies to England, and being mistaken at first for a narrative of real experiences, it was advertised to be reprinted, but a discovery of its character, I believe, prevented such a result. An attempt is made in it, by simplicity of style, minuteness of nautical descriptions, and circumstantiality of narration, to give it that air of truth which constitutes the principal attraction of Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative, and Robinson Crusoe; but it has none of the pleasing interest of these tales; it is as full of wonders as Munchausen, has as many atrocities as the Book of Pirates, and as liberal an array of paining and revolting horrors as ever was invented by Anne Radcliffe or George Walker. Thus far a tendency to extravagance had been the most striking infirmity of his genius. He had been more anxious to be intense than to be natural; and some of his *bizarreries* had been mistaken for satire, and admired for that quality. Afterward he was more judicious, and if his outlines were incredible it was commonly forgotten in the simplicity of his details and their cohesive cumulation.

Near the end of the year 1838 he settled in Philadelphia. He had

*The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, of Nantucket; comprising the Details of a Mutiny and Atrocious Butchery on board the American Brig Grampus, on her way to the South Seas—with an Account of the Re-capture of the Vessel by the Survivers; their Shipwreck, and subsequent Horrible Sufferings from Famine; their Deliverance by means of the British schooner Jane Gray; the brief Cruise of this latter Vessel in the Antarctic Ocean; her Capture, and the Massacre of her Crew among a Group of Islands in the 84th parallel of southern latitude; together with the incredible Adventures and Discoveries still further South, to which that distressing Calamity gave rise.—1 vol. 12mo. pp. 198. New-York, Harper & Brothers, 1838.

no very definite purposes, but trusted for support to the chances of success as a magazinist and newspaper correspondent. Mr. Burton, the comedian, had recently established the "Gentleman's Magazine," and of this he became a contributor, and in May, 1839, the chief editor, devoting to it, for ten dollars a week, two hours every day, which left him abundant time for more important labors. In the same month he agreed to furnish such reviewals as he had written for the "Literary Messenger," for the "Literary Examiner," a new magazine at Pittsburgh. But his more congenial pursuit was tale writing, and he produced about this period some of his most remarkable and characteristic works in a department of imaginative composition in which he was henceforth alone and unapproachable. The "Fall of the House of Usher," and "Legeia," are the most interesting illustrations of his mental organization—his masterpieces in a peculiar vein of romantic creation. They have the unquestionable stamp of genius. The analyses of the growth of madness in one, and the thrilling revelations of the existence of a first wife in the person of a second, in the other, are made with consummate skill; and the strange and solemn and fascinating beauty which informs the style and invests the circumstances of both, drugs the mind, and makes us forget the improbabilities of their general design.

An awakened ambition and the healthful influence of a conviction that his works were appreciated, and that his fame was increasing, led him for a while to cheerful views of life, and to regular habits of conduct. He wrote to a friend, the author of "Edge Hill," in Richmond, that he had quite overcome "the seductive and dangerous besetment" by which he had so often been prostrated, and to another friend that, incredible as it might seem, he had become a "model of temperance," and of "other virtues," which it had sometimes been difficult for him to practise. Before the close of the summer, however, he relapsed into his former courses, and for weeks was regardless of everything but a morbid and insatiable appetite for the means of intoxication.

In the autumn he published all the prose stories he had then written, in two volumes, under the title of "Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque." The work was not saleable, perhaps because its contents were too familiar from recent separate publication in magazines; and it was not so warmly praised, generally, as I think it should have been, though in point of style the pieces which it embraced are much less perfect than they were made subsequently.

He was with Mr. Burton until June, 1840—more than a year. Mr.

Burton appreciated his abilities and would gladly have continued the connexion; but Poe was so unsteady of purpose and so unreliable that the actor was never sure when he left the city that his business would be cared for. On one occasion, returning after the regular day of publication, he found the number unfinished, and Poe incapable of duty. He prepared the necessary copy himself, published the magazine, and was proceeding with arrangements for another month, when he received a letter from his assistant, of which the tone may be inferred from this answer:

"I am sorry you have thought it necessary to send me such a letter. Your troubles have given a morbid tone to your feelings which it is your duty to discourage. I myself have been as severely handled by the world as you can possibly have been, but my sufferings have not tinged my mind with melancholy, nor jaundiced my views of society. You must rouse your energies, and if care assail you, conquer it. I will gladly overlook the past. I hope you will as easily fulfil your pledges for the future. We shall agree very well, though I cannot permit the magazine to be made a vehicle for that sort of severity which you think is so "successful with the mob." I am truly much less anxious about making a monthly "sensation" than I am upon the point of fairness. You must, my dear sir, get rid of your avowed ill-feelings toward your brother authors. You see I speak plainly: I cannot do otherwise upon such a subject. You say the people love havoc. I think they love justice. I think you yourself would not have written the article on Dawes, in a more healthy state of mind. I am not trammelled by any vulgar consideration of expediency; I would rather lose money than by such undue severity wound the feelings of a kind-hearted and honorable man. And I am satisfied that Dawes has something of the true fire in him. I regretted your word-catching spirit. But I wander from my design. I accept your proposition to recommence your interrupted avocations upon the *Maga*. Let us meet as if we had not exchanged letters. Use more exercise, write when feelings prompt, and be assured of my friendship. You will soon regain a healthy activity of mind, and laugh at your past vagaries."

This letter was kind and judicious. It gives us a glimpse of Poe's theory of criticism, and displays the temper and principles of the literary comedian in an honorable light. Two or three months afterward Burton went out of town to fulfil a professional engagement, leaving material and directions for completing the next number of the magazine in four days. He was absent nearly a fortnight, and on returning he found that his printers in the meanwhile had not received a line of copy; but that Poe had prepared the prospectus of a new monthly, and obtained transcripts of his subscription and account books, to be used in a scheme for supplanting him. He encountered his associate late in the evening at one of his accustomed haunts, and said, "Mr. Poe, I am astonished: Give me my manuscripts so

that I can attend to the duties you have so shamefully neglected, and when you are sober we will settle." Poe interrupted him with "Who are you that presume to address me in this manner? Burton, I am—*the editor—of the Penn Magazine*—and you are—hiccup—*a fool.*" Of course this ended his relations with the "Gentleman's."

In November, 1840, Burton's miscellany was merged in "The Casket," owned by Mr. George R. Graham, and the new series received the name of its proprietor, who engaged Poe in its editorship. His connexion with "Graham's Magazine" lasted about a year and a half, and this was one of the most active and brilliant periods in his literary life. He wrote in it several of his finest tales and most trenchant criticisms, and challenged attention by his papers entitled "Autography," and those on cryptology and cyphers. In the first, adopting a suggestion of Lavater, he attempted the illustration of character from handwriting; and in the second, he assumed that human ingenuity could construct no secret writing which human ingenuity could not resolve: a not very dangerous proposition, since it implied no capacity in himself to discover every riddle of this kind that should be invented. He, however, succeeded with several difficult cryptographs that were sent to him, and the direction of his mind to the subject led to the composition of some of the tales of ratiocination which so largely increased his reputation. The infirmities which induced his separation from Mr. White and from Mr. Burton at length compelled Mr. Graham to seek for another editor; but Poe still remained in Philadelphia, engaged from time to time in various literary occupations, and in the vain effort to establish a journal of his own to be called "The Stylus." Although it requires considerable capital to carry on a monthly of the description he proposed, I think it would not have been difficult, with his well-earned fame as a magazinist, for him to have found a competent and suitable publisher, but for the unfortunate notoriety of his habits, and the failure in succession of three persons who had admired him for his genius and pitied him for his misfortunes, by every means that tact or friendship could suggest, to induce the consistency and steadiness of application indispensable to success in such pursuits. It was in the spring of 1848—more than a year after his dissociation from Graham—that he wrote the story of "The Gold Bug," for which he was paid a prize of one hundred dollars. It has relation to Captain Kyd's treasure, and is one of the most remarkable illustrations of his ingenuity of construction and apparent subtlety of reasoning. The interest depends upon the solution of an intricate cypher. In the autumn of 1844 Poe removed to New York.

It was while he resided in Philadelphia that I became acquainted with him. His manner, except during his fits of intoxication, was very quiet and gentlemanly; he was usually dressed with simplicity and elegance; and when once he sent for me to visit him, during a period of illness caused by protracted and anxious watching at the side of his sick wife, I was impressed by the singular neatness and the air of refinement in his home. It was in a small house, in one of the pleasant and silent neighborhoods far from the centre of the town, and though slightly and cheaply furnished, everything in it was so tasteful and so fitly disposed that it seemed altogether suitable for a man of genius. For this and for most of the comforts he enjoyed in his brightest as in his darkest years, he was chiefly indebted to his mother-in-law, who loved him with more than maternal devotion and constancy.

He had now written his most acute criticisms and his most admirable tales. Of tales, besides those to which I have referred, he had produced "The Descent into the Maelström," "The Premature Burial," "The Purloined Letter," "The Murders of the Rue Morgue," and its sequel, "The Mystery of Marie Roget." The scenes of the last three are in Paris, where the author's friend, the Chevalier Auguste Dupin, is supposed to reveal to him the curiosities of his experience and observation in matters of police. "The Mystery of Marie Roget" was first published in the autumn of 1842, before an extraordinary excitement, occasioned by the murder of a young girl named Mary Rogers, in the vicinity of New York, had quite subsided, though several months after the tragedy. Under pretence of relating the fate of a Parisian *grisette*, Mr. Poe followed in minute detail the essential while merely paralleling the inessential facts of the real murder. His object appears to have been to reinvestigate the case and to settle his own conclusions as to the probable culprit. There is a great deal of hair-splitting in the incidental discussions by Dupin, throughout all these stories, but it is made effective. Much of their popularity, as well as that of other tales of ratiocination by Poe, arose from their being in a new key. I do not mean to say that they are not ingenious; but they have been thought more ingenious than they are, on account of their method and air of method. In "The Murders of the Rue Morgue," for instance, what ingenuity is displayed in unravelling a web which has been woven for the express purpose of unravelling? The reader is made to confound the ingenuity of the suppositious Dupin with that of the writer of the story. These works brought the name of Poe himself somewhat conspicuously be-

fore the law courts of Paris. The journal, *La Commerce*, gave a *feuilleton* in which "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" appeared in translation. Afterward a writer for *La Quotidienne* served it for that paper under the title of "*L'Orang-Otang.*" A third party accused *La Quotidienne* of plagiary from *La Commerce*, and in the course of the legal investigation which ensued, the *feuilletoniste* of *La Commerce* proved to the satisfaction of the tribunal that he had stolen the tale entirely from Mr. Poe,* whose merits were soon after canvassed in

*The controversy is wittily described in the following extract from a Parisian journal, *L'Entr Acte*, of the twentieth of October, 1846:

"Un grand journal accusait l'autre jour M. Old-Nick d'avoir volé un orang-outang. Cet intéressant animal flânait dans le feuilleton de *la Quotidienne*, lorsque M. Old-Nick le vit, le trouva à son goût et s'en empara. Notre confrère avait sans doute besoin d'un groom. On sait que les Anglais ont depuis long-temps colonisé les orangs-outangs, et les ont instruits dans l'art de porter les lettres sur un plateau de vermeil, et de vernir les bottes. Il paraitrait, toujours suivant le même grand journal, que M. Old-Nick, après avoir derobé cet orang-outang à *la Quotidienne*, l'aurait ensuite cédé au *Commerce*, comme propriété à lui appartenant. Je sais que M. Old-Nick est un garçon plein d'esprit et plein d'honneur, assez riche de son propre fonds pour ne pas s'approprier les orangs-outangs des autres; cette accusation me surprit. Après tout, me-dis-je, il y a éu des monomanies plus extraordinaries que celle-là; le grand Bacon ne pouvait voir un bâton de cire à cacheter sans se l'approprier: dans une conférence avec M. de Metternich aux Tuileries, l'Empereur s'apercut que le diplomate autrichien glissait des pains à cacheter dans sa poche. M. Old-Nick a une autre manie, il fait les orangs-outangs. Je m'attendais toujours à ce que *la Quotidienne* jetât feu et flammes et demandât à grands cris son homme des bois. Il faut vous dire que j'avais lu son histoire dans *le Commerce*, elle était charmante d'esprit et de style, pleine de rapidité et de désinvolture; *la Quotidienne* l'avait également publiée, mais en trois feuilletons. L'orang-outang du *Commerce* n'avait que neuf colonnes. Il s'agissait donc d'un autre quadrumane littéraire. Ma foi non! c'était le meme; seulement il n'appartenait ni à *la Quotidienne*, ni au *Commerce*. M. Old-Nick l'avait emprunté à un romancier Américain qu'il est en train d'inventer dans la *Revue des Deux-Mondes*. Ce romancier s'appelle Poe; je ne dis pas le contraire. Voilà donc un écrivain qui use du droit légitime d'arranger les nouvelles d'un romancier Américain qu'il a inventé, et on l'accuse de plagiat, de vol au feuilleton; on alarme ses amis en leur faisant croire que cet écrivain est possédé de la monomanie des orangs-outangs. Par la Courchamps! voilà qui me paraît léger. M. Old-Nick a écrit au journal en question une réponse pour rétablir sa moralité, attaquée à l'endroit des orangs-outangs. Cet orang-outang a mis, ces jours derniers, toute la littérature en émoi; personne n'a cru un seul instant à l'accusation qu'on a essayé de faire peser sur M. Old-Nick, d'autant plus qu'il avait pris soin d'indiquer lui-même la cage où il avait pris son orang-outang. Ceci va fournir de nouvelles armes à la secte qui croit aux romanciers Américains. Le préjugé de l'existence de Cooper en prendra de nouvelles forces. En attendant que la vérité se découvre, nous sommes forcés de convenir que ce Poë est un gaillard bien fin, bien spirituel, quand il est arrangé par M. Old-Nick.

the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*," and whose best tales were upon this impulse translated by Mme. Isabelle Meunier for the *Democratie Pacifique* and other French gazettes.

In New York Poe entered upon a new sort of life. Heretofore, from the commencement of his literary career, he had resided in provincial towns. Now he was in a metropolis, and with a reputation which might have served as a passport to any society he could desire. For the first time he was received into circles capable of both the appreciation and the production of literature. He added to his fame soon after he came to the city by the publication of that remarkable composition "The Raven," of which Mr. Willis has observed that in his opinion "it is the most effective single example of fugitive poetry ever published in this country, and is unsurpassed in English poetry for subtle conception, masterly ingenuity of versification, and consistent sustaining of imaginative lift"; and by that of one of the most extraordinary instances of the naturalness of detail—the verisimilitude of minute narrative—for which he was preëminently distinguished, his "Mesmeric Revelation," purporting to be the last conversation of a somnambule, held just before death with his magnetizer; which was followed by the yet more striking exhibition of abilities in the same way, entitled "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," in which the subject is represented as having been mesmerized in *articulo mortis*. These pieces were reprinted throughout the literary and philosophical world, in nearly all languages, everywhere causing sharp and curious speculation, and where readers could be persuaded that they were fables, challenging a reluctant but genuine admiration.

He had not been long in New-York before he was engaged by Mr. Willis and General Morris as critic and assistant editor of "The Mirror." He remained in this situation about six months, when he became associated with Mr. Briggs in the conduct of the "Broadway Journal," which in October, 1845, passed entirely into his possession. He had now the long-sought but never before enjoyed absolute control of a literary gazette, and, with much friendly assistance, he maintained it long enough to show that whatever his genius, he had not the kind or degree of talent necessary to such a position. His chief critical writings in the "Broadway Journal," were a paper on Miss Barrett's Poems and a long discussion of the subject of plagiarism, with especial reference to Mr. Longfellow. In March, 1845, he had given a lecture at the Society Library upon the American poets, composed, for the most part, of fragments of his previously published reviewals; and in the autumn he accepted an invitation to read a poem before the

Boston Lyceum. A week after the event, he printed in the "Broadway Journal" the following account of it, in reply to a paragraph in one of the city papers, founded upon a statement in the Boston "Transcript."

"Our excellent friend, Major Noah, has suffered himself to be cajoled by that most beguiling of all beguiling little divinities, Miss Walter, of 'The Transcript.' We have been looking all over her article with the aid of a taper, to see if we could discover a single syllable of truth in it—and really blush to acknowledge that we cannot. The adorable creature has been telling a parcel of fibs about us, by way of revenge for something that we did to Mr. Longfellow (who admires her very much) and for calling her 'a pretty little witch' into the bargain. The facts of the case seem to be these: We *were* invited to 'deliver' (stand and deliver) a poem before the Boston Lyceum. As a matter of course, we accepted the invitation. The audience *was* 'large and distinguished.' Mr. Cushing* preceded us with a very capital discourse: he was much applauded. On arising, we were most cordially received. We occupied some fifteen minutes with an apology for not' delivering,' as is usual in such cases, a didactic poem: a didactic poem, in our opinion, being precisely no poem at all. After some farther words—still of apology—for the 'indefinitiveness' and 'general imbecility' of what we had to offer—all so unworthy a *Bostonian* audience—we commenced, and, with many interruptions of applause, concluded. Upon the whole the approbation was considerably more (the more the pity too) than that bestowed upon Mr. Cushing. When we had made an end, the audience, of course, arose to depart; and about one-tenth of them, probably, had really departed, when Mr. Coffin, one of the managing committee, arrested those who remained, by the announcement that we had been requested to deliver 'The Raven.' We delivered 'The Raven' forthwith—(without taking a receipt)—were very cordially applauded again—and this was the end of it—with the exception of the sad tale invented to suit her own purposes, by that amiable little enemy of ours, Miss Walter. We shall never call a woman 'a pretty little witch' again, as long as we live.

"We like Boston. We were born there—and perhaps it is just as well not to mention that we are heartily, ashamed of the fact. The Bostonians are very well in their way. Their hotels are bad. Their pumpkin pies are delicious. Their poetry is not so good. Their common is no common thing—and the duck-pond might answer—if its answer could be heard for the frogs. But with all these good qualities the Bostonians have no soul. They have always evinced towards us, individually, the basest ingratitude for the services we rendered them in enlightening them about the originality of Mr. Longfellow. When we accepted, therefore, an invitation to 'deliver' a poem in Boston—we accepted it simply and solely, because we had a curiosity to know how it felt to be publicly hissed—and because we wished to see what effect we could produce by a neat little *impromptu* speech in reply. Perhaps, however, we overrated our own importance, or the Bostonian want of common civility—which is not quite so manifest as one or two of their editors would wish the public to believe. We assure Major Noah that he is wrong. The Bostonians are well-bred—as *very* dull persons very generally are. Still, with their vile ingratitude staring us in the eyes, it could scarcely be supposed that we

*Hon. Caleb Cushing, then recently returned from his mission to China.

would put ourselves to the trouble of composing for the Bostonians anything in the shape of an *original* poem. We did not. We had a poem (of about 500 lines) lying by us—one quite as good as new—one, at all events, that we considered would answer sufficiently well for an audience of Transcendentalists. *That* we gave them—it was the best that we had—for the price—and it *did* answer remarkably well. Its name was *not* 'The Messenger-Star'—who but Miss Walter would ever think of so delicious a little bit of invention as that? We had no name for it at all. The poem is what is occasionally called a 'juvenile poem'—but the fact is, it is anything but juvenile now, for we wrote it, printed it, and published it, in book form, before we had fairly completed our tenth year. We read it *verbatim*, from a copy now in our possession, and which we shall be happy to show at any moment to any of our inquisitive friends. We do not, ourselves, think the poem a remarkably good one:—it is not sufficiently transcendental. Still it did well enough for the Boston audience—who evinced characteristic discrimination in understanding, and especially applauding, all those knotty passages which we ourselves have not yet been able to understand.

"As regards the anger of the 'Boston Times' and one or two other absurdities—as regards, we say, the wrath of Achilles—we incurred it—or rather its manifestation—by letting some of our cat out of the bag a few hours sooner than we had intended. Over a bottle of champagne, that night, we confessed to Messrs. Cushing, Whipple, Hudson, Fields, and a few other natives who swear not altogether by the frog-pond—we confessed, we say, the soft impeachment of the hoax. *Et hinc illae irae.* We should have waited a couple of days."

It is scarcely necessary to suggest that this must have been written before he had quite recovered from the long intoxication which maddened him at the time to which it refers—that he was not born in Boston, that the poem was not published in his tenth year, and that the "hoax" was all an afterthought. Two weeks later he renewed the discussion of the subject in the "Broadway Journal," commenting as follows upon allusions to it by other parties:

"Were the question demanded of us—'What is the most exquisite of sublunary pleasures?' we should reply, without hesitation, the making a fuss, or, in the classical words of a western friend, the 'kicking up a bobbery.' Never was a 'bobbery' more delightful than which we have just succeeded in 'kicking up' all around about Boston Common. We never saw the Frogpondians so lively in our lives. They seem absolutely to be upon the point of waking up. In about nine days the puppies may get open their eyes. That is to say they may get open their eyes to certain facts which have long been obvious to all the world except themselves—the facts that there exist other cities than Boston—other men of letters than Professor Longfellow—other vehicles of literary information than the 'Down-East Review.'

"We had *tact* enough not to be 'taken in and done for' by the Bostonians. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*—(*for timeo* substitute *contemno* or *turn-up-our-nose-o*). We knew very well that among a certain *clique* of Frogpondians, there existed a predetermination to abuse us under *any* circumstances. We knew that, write what we would, they would swear it to be worthless. We knew that were we to compose

for them a 'Paradise Lost,' they would pronounce it an indifferent poem. It would have been very weak in us, then, to put ourselves to the trouble of attempting to please these people. We preferred pleasing ourselves. We read before them a 'juvenile'—a *very* 'juvenile' poem—and thus the Frogpondians were *had*—were delivered up to the enemy bound hand and foot. Never were a set of people more completely demolished. They have blustered and flustered—but what have they done or said that has not made them more thoroughly ridiculous?—what, in the name of Momus, is it *possible* for them to do or to say? We 'delivered' them the 'juvenile poem' and they received it with applause. This is accounted for by the fact that the *clique* (contemptible in numbers as in everything else) were overruled by the rest of the assembly. These malignants did not *dare* to interrupt by their preconcerted hisses, the respectful and profound attention of the majority. We have been told, indeed, that as many as three or four of the personal friends of the little old lady entitled Miss Walter, did actually leave the hall during the recitation—but, upon the whole, this was the very best thing they could do. We have been told this, we say—we did not *see* them take their departure:—the fact is they belong to a class of people that we make it a point *never to see*. The poem being thus well received, in spite of this rediculous little cabal—the next thing to be done was to abuse it in the papers. Here, they imagined, they were sure of their game. But what have they accomplished? The poem, they say, is bad. We admit it. We insisted upon this fact in our prefatory remarks, and we insist upon it now, over and over again. It *is* bad—it is wretched—and what then? We wrote it at ten years of age—had it been worth even a pumpkin-pie undoubtedly we should not have 'delivered' it to *them*. To demonstrate its utter worthlessness, 'The Boston Star' has copied the poem in full, with two or three columns of criticism (we suppose) by way of explaining that we should have been hanged for its perpetration. There is no doubt of it whatever—we should. 'The Star,' however, (a dull luminary) has done us more honor than it intended; it has copied our *third* edition of the poem, revised and improved. We considered this too good for the occasion by one-half, and so 'delivered' the *first* edition with all its imperfections on its head. It is the first—the original edition—the *delivered* edition—which we now republish in our collection of Poems."

When he accepted the invitation of the Lyceum he intended to write an original poem, upon a subject which he said had haunted his imagination for years; but cares, anxieties, and feebleness of will, prevented; and a week before the appointed night he wrote to a friend, imploring assistance. "You compose with such astonishing facility," he urged in his letter, "that you can easily furnish me, quite soon enough, a poem that shall be equal to my reputation. For the love of God I beseech you to help me in this extremity." The lady wrote him kindly, advising him judiciously, but promising to attempt the fulfilment of his wishes. She was, however, an invalid, and so failed.*

*This lady was the late Mrs. Osgood, and a fragment of what she wrote under these circumstances may be found in the last edition of her works under the title of "Lulin, or the Diamond Fay."

At last, instead of pleading illness himself, as he had previously done on a similar occasion, he determined to read his poem of "Al Aaraaf," the original publication of which, in 1829, has already been stated.

The last number of the "Broadway Journal" was published on the third of January, 1846, and Poe soon after commenced the series of papers entitled "The Literati of New-York City," which were published in "The Lady's Book" in six numbers, from May to October. Their spirit, boldness, and occasional causticity, caused them to be much talked about, and three editions were necessary to supply the demand for some numbers of the magazine containing them. They however led to a disgraceful quarrel, and this to their premature conclusion. Dr. Thomas Dunn English, who had at one time sustained the most intimate relations with Poe, chose to evince his resentment of the critic's unfairness by the publication of a card in which he painted strongly the infirmities of Poe's life and character, and alleged that he had on several occasions inflicted upon him personal chastisement. This was not a wise confession, for a gentleman never appeals to his physical abilities except for defence. But the entire publication, even if every word of it were true, was unworthy of Dr. English, unnecessary, and not called for by Poe's article, though that, as every one acquainted with the parties might have seen, was entirely false in what purported to be facts. The statement of Dr. English appeared in the New-York "Mirror" of the twenty-third of June, and on the twenty-seventh Mr. Poe sent to Mr. Godey for publication in the "Lady's Book" his rejoinder, which would have made about five of the large pages of that miscellany. Mr. Godey very properly declined to print it, and observed, in the communication of his decision, that the tone of the article was regarded as unsuitable for his work and as altogether wrong. In compliance with the author's wishes, however, he had caused its appearance in a daily paper. Poe then wrote to him:

"The man or men who told you that there was anything wrong in *the tone* of my reply were either my enemies, or your enemies, or asses. When you see them, tell them so, from me. I have never written an article upon which I more confidently depend for *literary* reputation than that Reply. Its merit lay in its being precisely adapted to its purpose. In this city I have had upon it the favorable judgments of the best men. All the error about it was yours. You should have done as I requested—published it in the 'Book.' It is of no use to conceive a plan if you have to depend upon another for its execution."

Nevertheless, I agree with Mr. Godey. Poe's article was as bad as

that of English. Yet a part of one of its paragraphs is interesting, and it is here transcribed:

—"Let me not permit any profundity of disgust to induce, even for an instant, a violation of the dignity of truth. What is *not false*, amid the scurrility of this man's statements, it is not in my nature to brand as false, although oozing from the filthy lips of which a lie is the only natural language. The errors and frailties which I deplore, it cannot at least be asserted that I have been the coward to deny. Never, even, have I made attempt at *extenuating* a weakness which is (or, by the blessing of God, *was*) a calamity, although those who did not know me intimately had little reason to regard it otherwise than as a crime. For, indeed, had my pride, or that of my family permitted, there was much—very much—there was everything—to be offered in extenuation. Perhaps, even, there was an epoch at which it might not have been wrong in me to hint—what by the testimony of Dr. Francis and other medical men I might have demonstrated, had the public, indeed, cared for the demonstration—that the irregularities so profoundly lamented were the *effect* of a terrible evil rather than its cause.—And now let me thank God that in redemption from the physical ill I have forever got rid of the moral."

Dr. Francis never gave any such testimony. On one occasion Poe borrowed fifty dollars from a distinguished literaty woman of South Carolina, promising to return it in a few days, and when he failed to do so, and was asked for a written acknowledgment of the debt that might be exhibited to the husband of the friend who had thus served him, he denied all knowledge of it, and threatened to exhibit a correspondence which he said would make the woman infamous, if she said any more on the subject. Of course there had never been any such correspondence, but when Poe heard that a brother of the slandered party was in quest of him for the purpose of taking the satisfaction supposed to be due in such cases, he sent for Dr. Francis and induced him to carry to the gentleman his retraction and apology, with a statement which seemed true enough at the moment, that Poe was "out of his head." It is an ungracious duty to describe such conduct in a person of Poe's unquestionable genius and capacities of greatness, but those who are familiar with the career of this extraordinary creature can recall but too many similar anecdotes; and as to his intemperance, they perfectly well understand that its pathology was like that of ninety-nine of every hundred cases of the disease.

As the autumn of 1846 wore on, Poe's habits of frequent intoxication and his inattention to the means of support reduced him to much more than common destitution. He was now living at Fordham, several miles from the city, so that his necessities were not generally known even among his acquaintances; but when the dangerous illness of his wife was added to his misfortunes, and his dissipation and

accumulated causes of anxiety had prostrated all his own energies, the subject was introduced into the journals. The "Express" said:

"We regret to learn that Edgar A. Poe and his wife are both dangerously ill with the consumption, and that the hand of misfortune lies heavy upon their temporal affairs. We are sorry to mention the fact that they are so far reduced as to be barely able to obtain the necessaries of life. This is indeed a hard lot, and we hope that the friends and admirers of Mr. Poe will come promptly to his assistance in his bitterest hour of need."

Mr. Willis, in an article in the "Home Journal" suggesting a hospital for disabled laborers with the brain, said—

"The feeling we have long entertained on this subject, has been freshened by a recent paragraph in the 'Express,' announcing that Mr. Edgar A. Poe and his wife were both dangerously ill, and suffering for want of the common necessaries of life. Here is one of the finest scholars, one of the most original men of genius, and one of the most industrious of the literary profession of our country, whose temporary suspension of labor, from bodily illness, drops him immediately to a level with the common objects of public charity. There was no intermediate stopping-place—no respectful shelter where, with the delicacy due to genius and culture, he might secure aid, unadvertised, till, with returning health, he could resume his labors and his unmortified sense of independence. He must either apply to individual friends—(a resource to which death is sometimes almost preferable)—or *suffer down* to the level where Charity receives claimants, but where Rags and Humiliation are the only recognised Ushers to her presence. Is this right? Should there not be, in all highly civilized communities, an Institution designed expressly for educated and refined objects of charity—a hospital, a retreat, a home of seclusion and comfort, the sufficient claims to which would be such susceptibilities as are violated by the above mentioned appeal in a daily newspaper."

The entire article from which this paragraph is taken, was an ingenious apology for Mr. Poe's infirmities; but it was conceived and executed in a generous spirit, and it had a quick effect in various contributions, which relieved the poet from pecuniary embarrassments. The next week he published the following letter:

"*My Dear Willis*:—The paragraph which has been put in circulation respecting my wife's illness, my own, my poverty, etc., is now lying before me; together with the beautiful lines by Mrs. Locke and those by Mrs. ——, to which the paragraph has given rise, as well as your kind and manly comments in 'The Home Journal.' The motive of the paragraph I leave to the conscience of him or her who wrote it or suggested it. Since the thing is done, however, and since the concerns of my family are thus pitilessly thrust before the public, I perceive no mode of escape from a public statement of what is true and what erroneous in the report alluded to. That my wife is ill, then, is true; and you may imagine with what feelings I add that this illness, hopeless from the first, has been heightened and precipitated by her reception at two different periods, of anonymous letters,—one enclosing

the paragraph now in question; the other, those published calumnies of Messrs. ———, for which I yet hope to find redress in a court of justice.

"Of the facts, that I myself have been long and dangerously ill, and that my illness has been a well understood thing among my brethren of the press, the best evidence is afforded by the innumerable paragraphs of personal and of literary abuse with which I have been latterly assailed. This matter, however, will remedy itself. At the very first blush of my new prosperity, the gentlemen who toadied me in the old, will recollect themselves and toady me again. You, who know me, will comprehend that I speak of these things only as having served, in a measure, to lighten the gloom of unhappiness, by a gentle and not unpleasant sentiment of mingled pity, merriment and contempt. That, as the inevitable consequence of so long an illness, I have been in want of money, it would be folly in me to deny—but that I have ever materially suffered from privation, beyond the extent of my capacity for suffering, is not altogether true. That I am 'without friends' is a gross calumny, which I am sure *you* never could have believed, and which a thousand noble-hearted men would have good right never to forgive me for permitting to pass unnoticed and undenied. Even in the city of New-York I could have no difficulty in naming a hundred persons, to each of whom—when the hour for speaking had arrived—I could and would have applied for aid with unbounded confidence, and with absolutely *no* sense of humiliation. I do not think, my dear Willis, that there is any need of my saying more. I am getting better, and may add—if it be any comfort to my enemies—that I have little fear of getting worse. The truth is, I have a great deal to do; and I have made up my mind not to die till it is done. Sincerely yours,

"December 30th, 1846. EDGAR A. POE."

This was written for effect. He had not been ill a great while, nor dangerously at all; there was no literary or personal abuse of him in the journals; and his friends in town had been applied to for money until their patience was nearly exhausted. His wife, however, was very sick, and in a few weeks she died. In a letter to a lady in Massachusetts, who, upon the appearance of the newspaper articles above quoted, had sent him money and expressions of sympathy, he wrote, under date of March 10, 1847:

"In answering your kind letter permit me in the very first place to absolve myself from a suspicion which, under the circumstances, you could scarcely have failed to entertain—a suspicion of discourtesy toward yourself, in not having more promptly replied to you . . . I could not help fearing that should you see my letter to Mr. Willis—in which a natural pride, which I feel you could not blame, impelled me to shrink from public charity, *even at the cost of truth, in denying those necessities which were but too real*—I could not help fearing that, should you see this letter, you would yourself feel pained at having caused me pain—at having been the means of giving further publicity to an unfounded report—at all events to the report of a wretchedness which I had thought it prudent (since the world regards wretchedness as a crime) so publicly to disavow. In a word, venturing to judge your noble nature by my own, I felt grieved lest my published denial might cause you to regret what you had done; and my first impulse was to write you, and

assure you, even at the risk of doing so too warmly, of the sweet emotion, made up of respect and gratitude alone, with which my heart was filled to overflowing. While I was hesitating, however, in regard to the propriety of this step, I was overwhelmed by a sorrow so poignant as to deprive me for several weeks of all power of thought or action. Your letter, now lying before me, tells me that I had not been mistaken in your nature, and that I should not have hesitated to address you; but believe me, my dear Mrs. L——, that I am already ceasing to regard those difficulties or misfortunes which have led me to even this partial correspondence with yourself."

For nearly a year Mr. Poe was not often before the public, but he was as industrious, perhaps, as he had been at any time, and early in 1848 advertisement was made of his intention to deliver several lectures, with a view to obtain an amount of money sufficient to establish his so-long-contemplated monthly magazine. His first lecture—and only one at this period—was given at the Society Library, in New-York, on the ninth of February, and was upon the cosmogony of the Universe; it was attended by an eminently intellectual auditory, and the reading of it occupied about two hours and a half; it was what he afterwards published under the title of "Eureka, a Prose Poem."

To the composition of this work he brought his subtlest and highest capacities, in their most perfect development. Denying that the arcana of the universe can be explored by induction, but informing his imagination with the various results of science, he entered with unhestitating boldness, though with no guide but the divinest instinct,—that sense of beauty, in which our great Edwards recognises the flowering of all truth—into the sea of speculation, and there built up of according laws and their phenomena, as under the influence of a scientific inspiration, his theory of Nature. I will not attempt the difficult task of condensing his propositions; to be apprehended they must be studied in his own terse and simple language; but in this we have a summary of that which he regards as fundamental: "The law which we call *Gravity*," he says, "exists on account of matter having been radiated, at its origin, atomically, into a *limited* sphere of space, from one, individual, unconditional, irrelative, and absolute Particle Proper, by the sole process in which it was possible to satisfy, at the same time, the two conditions, radiation and equable distribution throughout the sphere—that is to say, by a force varying in *direct* proportion with the squares of the distances between the radiated atoms, respectively, and the particular centre of radiation."

Poe was thoroughly persuaded that he had discovered the great secret; that the propositions of "Eureka" were true; and he was wont

to talk of the subject with a sublime and electrical enthusiasm which they cannot have forgotten who were familiar with him at the period of its publication. He felt that an author known solely by his adventures in the lighter literature, throwing down the gauntlet to professors of science, could not expect absolute fairness, and he had no hope but in discussions led by wisdom and candor. Meeting me, he said, "Have you read 'Eureka?'" I answered "Not yet: I have just glanced at the notice of it by Willis, who thinks it contains no more fact than fantasy, and I am sorry to see—sorry if it be true—suggests that it corresponds in tone with that gathering of sham and obsolete hypotheses addressed to fanciful tyros, the 'Vestiges of Creation;' and our good and really wise friend Bush, whom you will admit to be of all the professors, in temper one of the most habitually just, thinks that while you may have guessed very shrewdly, it would not be difficult to suggest many difficulties in the way of your doctrine." "It is by no means ingenuous," he replied, "to hint that there are such difficulties, and yet to leave them unsuggested. I challenge the investigation of every point in the book. I deny that there are any difficulties which I have not met and overthrown. Injustice is done me by the application of this word 'guess:' I have assumed *nothing* and proved *all*." In his preface he wrote: "To the few who love me and whom I love; to those who feel rather than to those who think; to the dreamers and those who put faith in dreams as in the only realities—I offer this book of truths, not in the character of Truth-Teller, but for the beauty that abounds in its truth: constituting it true. To these I present the composition as an Art-Product alone:—let us say as a Romance; or, if it be not urging too lofty a claim, as a Poem. What I here propound is true: therefore it cannot die: or if by any means it be now trodden down so that it die, it will rise again to the life everlasting."

When I read "Eureka" I could not help but think it immeasurably superior as an illustration of genius to the "Vestiges of Creation;" and as I admired the poem, (except the miserable attempt at humor in what purports to be a letter found in a bottle floating on the *Mare tenebrarum*,) so I regretted its pantheism, which is not necessary to its main design. To some of the objections to his work he made this answer in a letter to Mr. C. F. Hoffman, then editor of the "Literary World:"

"*Dear Sir:*—In your paper of July 29, I find some comments on 'Eureka,' a late book of my own; and I know you too well to suppose, for a moment, that you will refuse me the privilege of a few words in reply. I feel, even, that I might

safely claim, from Mr. Hoffman, the right, which every author has, of replying to his critic *tone for tone*—that is to say, of answering your correspondent, flippancy by flippancy and sneer by sneer—but, in the first place, I do not wish to disgrace the 'World'; and, in the second, I feel that I never should be done sneering, in the present instance, were I once to begin. Lamartine blames Voltaire for the use which he made of (*ruse*) misrepresentation, in his attacks on the priesthood; but our young students of Theology do not seem to be aware that in defence, or what they fancy to be defence, of Christianity, there is anything wrong in such gentlemanly peccadillos as the deliberate perversion of an author's text—to say nothing of the minor *indecora* of reviewing a book without reading it and without having the faintest suspicion of what it is about.

"You will understand that it is merely the *misrepresentations* of the *critique* in question to which I claim the privilege of reply:—the mere *opinions* of the writer can be of no consequence to me—and I should imagine of very little to himself—that is to say if he knows himself, personally, as well as *I* have the honor of knowing him. The first misrepresentation is contained in this sentence:—'This letter is a keen burlesque on the Aristotelian or Baconian methods of ascertaining Truth, both of which the writer ridicules and despises, and pours forth his rhapsodical ecstasies in a glorification of the third mode—the noble art of *guessing*.' What I *really* say is this:—That there is no absolute *certainty* either in the Aristotelian or Baconian process—that, for this reason, neither Philosophy is so profound as it fancies itself—and that neither has a right to sneer at that *seemingly* imaginative process called Intuition (by which the great Kepler attained his laws;) since 'Intuition,' after all, 'is but the conviction arising from those *in*ductions or *de*ductions of which the processes are so shadowy as to escape our consciousness, elude our reason or defy our capacity of expression.' The second misrepresentation runs thus:—'The developments of electricity and the formation of stars and suns, luminous and non-luminous, moons and planets, with their rings, &c., is deduced, very much according to the nebular theory of Laplace, from the principle propounded above.' Now the impression intended to be made here upon the reader's mind, by the 'Student of Theology,' is, evidently, that my theory may all be very well in its way, but that it is nothing but Laplace over again, with some modifications that he (the Student of Theology) cannot regard as at all important. I have only to say that no gentleman can accuse me of the disingenuousness here implied; inasmuch as, having proceeded with my theory up to that point at which Laplace's theory *meets* it, I then *give Laplace's theory in full*, with the expression of my firm conviction of its absolute truth *at all points*. The *ground* covered by the great French astronomer compares with that covered by my theory, as a bubble compares with the ocean on which it floats; nor has he the slightest allusion to the 'principle propounded above,' the principle of Unity being the source of all things—the principle of Gravity being merely the Reaction of the Divine Act which irradiated all things from Unity. In fact, *no* point of *my* theory has been even so much as alluded to by Laplace. I have not considered it necessary, here, to speak of the astronomical knowledge displayed in the 'stars *and* suns' of the Student of Theology, nor to hint that it would be better grammar to say that 'development and formation' *are*, than that development and formation *is*. The third misrepresentation lies in a foot-note, where the critic says:—'Further than this, Mr. Poe's claim that he can account for the existence of all organized beings—man included—merely from those principles on which the origin and present ap-

pearance of suns and worlds are explained, must be set down as mere bald assertion, without a particle of evidence. In other words we should term it *arrant fudge.*' The perversion at this point is involved in a wilful misapplication of the word 'principles.' I say 'wilful'; because, at page 63, I am *particularly* careful to distinguish between the principles proper, Attraction and Repulsion, and those merely resultant *sub*-principles which control the universe in detail. To these sub-principles, swayed by the immediate spiritual influence of Deity, I leave, without examination, *all that* which the Student of Theology so roundly asserts I account for on the *principles* which account for the constitution of suns, &c.

"In the third column of his 'review,' the critic says:—'He asserts that each soul is its own God—its own Creator.' What I *do* assert is, that 'each soul is, *in part*, its own God—its own Creator.' Just below, the critic says:—'After all these contradictory propoundings concerning God we would remind him of what he lays down on page 28—'of this Godhead in itself he alone is not imbecile—he alone is not impious who propounds *nothing*. A man who thus conclusively convicts himself of imbecility and impiety needs no further refutation.' Now the sentence, *as I wrote it*, and as *I find it* printed on that very page which the critic refers to and which *must have been lying before him* while he quoted my words, runs thus:—'Of this Godhead, *in itself*, he alone is not imbecile, &c., who propounds nothing.' By the italics, as the critic well knew, I design to distinguish between the two possibilities—that of a knowledge of God through his works and that of a knowledge of Him in his *essential nature*. The Godhead, *in itself*, is distinguished from the Godhead observed *in its effects*. But our critic is zealous. Moreover, being a divine, he is honest—ingenuous. It is his *duty* to pervert my meaning by omitting my italics—just as, in the sentence previously quoted, it was his Christian duty to falsify my argument by leaving out the two words, 'in part,' upon which turns the whole force—indeed the whole intelligibility of my proposition.

"Were these 'misrepresentations' (*is* that the name for them?) made for any less serious a purpose than that of branding my book as 'impious' and myself as a 'pantheist,' a 'polytheist,' a Pagan, or a God knows what (and indeed I care very little so it be not a 'Student of Theology,') I would have permitted their dishonesty to pass unnoticed, through pure contempt for the boyishness—for the *turn-down-shirt-collar-ness* of their tone:—but, as it is, you will pardon me, Mr. Editor, that I have been compelled to expose a 'critic' who, courageously preserving his own *anonymosity*, takes advantage of my absence from the city to misrepresent, and thus villify me, *by name*.

"*Fordham*, September 20, 1848." "EDGAR A. POE."

From this time Poe did not write much; he had quarrelled with the conductors of the chief magazines for which he had previously written, and they no longer sought his assistance. In a letter to a friend, he laments the improbabilities of an income from literary labor, saying:

"I have represented——to you as merely an ambitious simpleton, anxious to get into society with the reputation of conducting a magazine which somebody behind the curtain always prevents him from quite damning with his stupidity; he is a knave and a beast. I cannot write any more for the Milliner's Book, where T——n prints his feeble and *very* quietly made dilutions of other people's reviews; and you know that——can afford to pay but little, though I am glad to do any-

thing for a good fellow like——. In this emergency I sell articles to the vulgar and trashy —— — — ——, for $5 a piece. I enclose my last, cut out, lest you should see by my sending the paper in what company I am forced to appear."

His name was now frequently associated with that of one of the most brilliant women of New England, and it was publicly announced that they were to be married. He had first seen her on his way from Boston, when he visited that city to deliver a poem before the Lyceum there. Restless, near the midnight, he wandered from his hotel near where she lived, until he saw her walking in a garden. He related the incident afterward in one of his most exquisite poems, worthy of himself, of her, and of the most exalted passion.

"I saw thee once—once only—years ago;
I must not say *how* many—but *not* many.
It was a July midnight; and from out
A full-orbed moon, that, like thine own soul, soaring,
Sought a precipitate pathway up through heaven,
There fell a silvery-silken veil of light,
With quietude, and sultriness, and slumber,
Upon the upturn'd faces of a thousand
Roses that grew in an enchanted garden,
Where no wind dared to stir, unless on tiptoe—
Fell on the upturn'd faces of these roses
That gave out, in return for the love-light,
Their odorous souls in an ecstatic death—
Fell on the upturn'd faces of these roses
That smiled and died in this parterre, enchanted
By thee, and by the poetry of thy presence.
"Clad all in white, upon a violet bank
I saw thee half reclining; while the moon
Fell on the upturn'd faces of the roses,
And on thine own, upturn'd—alas, in sorrow!
"Was it not Fate, that, on this July midnight—
Was it not Fate, (whose name is also Sorrow,)
That bade me pause before that garden-gate,
To breathe the incense of those slumbering roses?
No footstep stirred; the hated world all slept,
Save only thee and me. (Oh, Heaven!—oh, God!
How my heart beats in coupling those two words!)
Save only thee and me. I paused—I looked—
And in an instant all things disappeared.
(Ah, bear in mind this garden was enchanted!)
The pearly lustre of the moon went out:
The mossy banks and the meandering paths,
The happy flowers and the repining trees,
Were seen no more: the very roses' odors
Died in the arms of the adoring airs.

All—all expired save thee—save less than thou:
Save only the divine light in thing eyes—
Save but the soul in thine uplifted eyes.
I saw but them—they were the world to me.
I saw but them—saw only them for hours—
Saw only them until the moon went down.
What wild heart-histories seemed to lie enwritten
Upon those crystalline, celestial spheres!
How dark a wo! yet how sublime a hope!
How silently serene a sea of pride!
How daring an ambition! yet how deep—
How fathomless a capacity for love!
"But now, at length, dear Dian sank from sight
Into a western couch of thunder-cloud;
And thou, a ghost, amid the entombing trees
Didst glide away. *Only thine eyes remained.*
They *would not* go—they never yet have gone.
Lighting my lonely pathway home that night,
They have not left me (as my hopes have) since.
They follow me—they lead me through the years.
They are my ministers—yet I their slave.
Their office is to illumine and enkindle—
My duty, *to be saved* by their bright light,
And purified in their electric fire,
And sanctified in their elysian fire.
They fill my soul with Beauty (which is Hope,)
And are far up in Heaven—the stars I kneel to
In the sad, silent watches of my night;
While even in the meridian glare of day
I see them still—two sweetly scintillant
Venuses, unextinguished by the sun!"

They were not married, and the breaking of the engagement affords a striking illustration of his character. He said to an acquaintance in New York, who congratulated with him upon the prospect of his union with a person of so much genius and so many virtues—"It is a mistake: I am not going to be married." "Why, Mr. Poe, I understand that the banns have been published." "I cannot help what you have heard, my dear Madam: but mark me, I shall not marry her." He left town the same evening, and the next day was reeling through the streets of the city which was the lady's home, and in the evening—that should have been the evening before the bridal—in his drunkenness he committed at her house such outrages as made necessary a summons of the police. Here was no insanity leading to indulgence: he went from New York with a determination thus to induce an ending of the engagement; and he succeeded.

Sometime in August, 1849, Mr. Poe left New-York for Virginia. In Philadelphia he encountered persons who had been his associates in dissipations while he lived there, and for several days he abandoned himself entirely to the control of his worst appetites. When his money was all spent, and the disorder of his dress evinced the extremity of his recent intoxication, he asked in charity means for the prosecution of his journey to Richmond. There, after a few days, he joined a temperance society, and his conduct showed the earnestness of his determination to reform his life. He delivered in some of the principal towns of Virginia two lectures, which were well attended, and renewing his acquaintance with a lady whom he had known in his youth, he was engaged to marry her, and wrote to his friends that he should pass the remainder of his days among the scenes endeared by all his pleasantest recollections of youth.

On Thursday, the fourth of October, he set out for New-York, to fulfil a literary engagement, and to prepare for his marriage. Arriving in Baltimore he gave his trunk to a porter, with directions to convey it to the cars which were to leave in an hour or two for Philadelphia, and went into a tavern to obtain some refreshment. Here he met acquaintances who invited him to drink; all his resolutions and duties were soon forgotten; in a few hours he was in such a state as is commonly induced only by long-continued intoxication; after a night of insanity and exposure, he was carried to a hospital; and there, on the evening of Sunday, the seventh of October, 1849, he died, at the age of thirty-eight years.

It is a melancholy history. No author of as much genius had ever in this country as much unhappiness; but Poe's unhappiness was in an unusual degree the result of infirmities of nature, or of voluntary faults in conduct. A writer who evidently knew him well, and who comes before us in the "Southern Literary Messenger" as his defender, is "compelled to admit that the blemishes in his life were effects of character rather than of circumstances."* How this character might have been modified by a judicious education of all his faculties I leave for the decision of others, but it will be evident to those who read this biography that the unchecked freedom of his earlier years was as unwise as its results were unfortunate.

It is contended that the higher intelligences, in the scrutiny to which they appeal, are not to be judged by the common laws; but I apprehend that this doctrine, as it is likely to be understood, is entirely

*Southern Literary Messenger, March, 1850, p. 179.

wrong. All men are amenable to the same principles, to the extent of the parallelism of these principles with their experience; and the line of duty becomes only more severe as it extends into the clearer atmosphere of truth and beauty which is the life of genius. *De mortuis nil nisi bonun* is a common and an honorable sentiment, but its proper application would lead to the suppression of the histories of half of the most conspicuous of mankind; in this case it is impossible on account of the notoriety of Mr. Poe's faults; and it would be unjust to the living against whom his hands were always raised and who had no resort but in his outlawry from their sympathies. Moreover, his career is full of instruction and warning, and it has always been made a portion of the penalty of wrong that its anatomy should be displayed for the common study and advantage.

The character of Mr. Poe's genius has been so recently and so admirably discussed by Mr. Lowell, with whose opinions on the subject I for the most part agree, that I shall say but little of it here, having already extended this notice beyond the limits at first designed. There is a singular harmony between his personal and his literary qualities. St. Pierre, who seemed to be without any nobility in his own nature, in his writings appeared to be moved only by the finest and highest impulses. Poe exhibits scarcely any virtue in either his life or his writings. Probably there is not another instance in the literature of our language in which so much has been accomplished without a recognition or a manifestation of conscience. Seated behind the intelligence, and directing it, according to its capacities, Conscience is the parent of whatever is absolutely and unquestionably beautiful in art as well as in conduct. It touches the creations of the mind and they have life; without it they have never, in the range of its just action, the truth and naturalness which are approved by universal taste or in enduring reputation. In Poe's works there is constantly displayed the most touching melancholy, the most extreme and terrible despair, but never reverence or remorse.

His genius was peculiar, and not, as he himself thought, various. He remarks in one of his letters:

"There is one particular in which I have had wrong done me, and it may not be indecorous in me to call your attention to it. The last selection of my tales was made from about seventy by one of our great little cliquists and claquers, Wiley and Putnam's reader, Duyckinck. He has what he thinks a taste for ratiocination, and has accordingly made up the book mostly of analytic stories. But this is not *representing* my mind in its various phases—it is not giving me fair play. In writing these tales one by one, at long intervals, I have kept the book unity

always in mind—that is, each has been composed with reference to its effect as part of *a whole*. In this view, one of my chief aims has been the widest diversity of subject, thought, and especially *tone* and manner of handling. Were *all* my tales now before me in a large volume, and as the composition of another, the merit which would principally arrest my attention would be their wide *diversity and variety*. You will be surprised to hear me say that, (omitting one or two of my first efforts,) I do not consider any one of my stories *better* than another. There is a vast variety of kinds, and, in degree of value, these kinds vary—but each tale is equally good *of its kind*. The loftiest kind is that of the highest imagination—and for this reason only 'Ligeia' may be called my best tale."

But it seems to me that this selection of his tales was altogether judicious. Had it been submitted to me I might indeed have changed it in one or two instances, but I should not have replaced any tale by one of a different tone. One of the qualities upon which Poe prided himself was his humor, and he has left us a large number of compositions in this department, but except a few paragraphs in his "Marginalia," scarcely anything which it would not have been injurious to his reputation to republish. His realm was on the shadowy confines of human experience, among the abodes of crime, gloom, and horror, and there he delighted to surround himself with images of beauty and of terror, to raise his solemn palaces and towers and spires in a night upon which should rise no sun. His minuteness of detail, refinement of reasoning, and propriety and power of language—the perfect keeping (to borrow a phrase from another domain of art) and apparent good faith with which he managed the evocation and exhibition of his strange and spectral and revolting creations—gave him an astonishing mastery over his readers, so that his books were closed as one would lay aside the nightmare or the spells of opium. The analytical subtlety evinced in his works has frequently been over estimated, as I have before observed, because it has not been sufficiently considered that his mysteries were composed with the express design of being dissolved. When Poe attempted the illustration of the profounder operations of the mind, as displayed in written reason or in real action, he frequently failed entirely.

In poetry, as in prose, he was eminently successful in the metaphysical treatment of the passions. His poems are constructed with wonderful ingenuity, and finished with consummate art. They display a sombre and weird imagination, and a taste almost faultless in the apprehension of that sort of beauty which was most agreeable to his temper. But they evince little genuine feeling, and less of that spontaneous ecstacy which gives its freedom, smoothness and naturalness to immortal verse. His own account of the composition of "The

Raven," discloses his methods—the absence of all impulse, and the absolute control of calculation and mechanism. That curious analysis of the processes by which he wrought would be incredible if from another hand.

He was not remarkably original in invention. Indeed some of his plagiarisms are scarcely paralleled for their audacity in all literary history: For instance, in his tale of "The Pit and the Pendulum," the complicate machinery upon which the interest depends is borrowed from a story entitled "Vivenzio, or Italian Vengeance," by the author of "The First and Last Dinner," in "Blackwood's Magazine." And I remember having been shown by Mr. Longfellow, several years ago, a series of papers which constitute a demonstration that Mr. Poe was indebted to him for the idea of "The Haunted Palace," one of the most admirable of his poems, which he so pertinaciously asserted had been used by Mr. Longfellow in the production of his "Beleaguered City." Mr. Longfellow's poem was written two or three years before the first publication of that by Poe, and it was during a portion of this time in Poe's possession; but it was not printed, I believe, until a few weeks after the appearance of "The Haunted Palace." "It would be absurd," as Poe himself said many times, "to believe the similarity of these pieces entirely accidental." This was the first cause of all that malignant criticism which for so many years he carried on against Mr. Longfellow. In his "Marginalia" he borrowed largely, especially from Coleridge, and I have omitted in the republication of these papers, numerous paragraphs which were rather compiled than borrowed from one of the profoundest and wisest of our own scholars.*

*I have neither space, time, nor inclination for a continuation of this subject, and I add but one other instance, in the words of the Philadelphia "Saturday Evening Post,"—published while Mr. Poe was living:

"One of the most remarkable plagiarisms was perpetrated by Mr. Poe, late of the Broadway Journal, whose harshness as a critic and assumption of peculiar originality, makes the fault, in his case, more glaring. This gentleman, a few years ago, in Philadelphia, published a work on Conchology as original, when in reality it was a copy, nearly verbatim, of 'The Text-Book of Conchology, by Capt. Thomas Brown,' printed in Glasgow in 1833, a duplicate of which we have in our library. Mr. Poe actually took out a copyright for the American edition of Capt. Brown's work, and, omitting all mention of the English original, pretended, in the preface, to have been under great obligations to several scientific gentlemen of this city. It is but justice to add, that in the second edition of this book, published lately in Philadelphia, the name of Mr. Poe is withdrawn from the title-page, and his initials only affixed to the preface. But the affair is one of the most curious on record."

In criticism, as Mr. Lowell justly remarks, Mr. Poe had "a scientific precision and coherence of logic;" he had remarkable dexterity in the dissection of sentences; but he rarely ascended from the particular to the general, from subjects to principles: he was familiar with the microscope but never looked through the telescope. His criticisms are of value to the degree in which they are demonstrative, but his unsupported assertions and opinions were so apt to be influenced by friendship or enmity, by the desire to please or the fear to offend, or by his constant ambition to surprise, or produce a sensation, that they should be received in all cases with distrust of their fairness. A volume might be filled with literary judgments by him as antagonistical and inconsistent as the sharpest antitheses. For example, when Mr. Laughton Osborn's romance, "The Confessions of a Poet," came out, he reviewed it in "The Southern Literary Messenger," saying:

"There is nothing of the *vates* about the author. He is no poet—and most positively he is no prophet. He avers upon his word of honor that in commencing this work he loads a pistol and places it upon the table. He further states that, upon coming to a conclusion, it is his intention to blow out what he supposes to be his brains. Now this is excellent. But, even with so rapid a writer as the poet must undoubtedly be, there would be some little difficulty in completing the book under thirty days or thereabouts. The best of powder is apt to sustain injury by lying so long 'in the load.' We sincerely hope the gentleman took the precaution to examine his priming before attempting the rash act. A flash in the pan—and in such a case—were a thing to be lamented. Indeed there would be no answering for the consequences. We might even have a second series of the 'Confessions.'"—*Southern Literary Messenger*, i. 459.

This review was attacked, particularly in the Richmond "Compiler," and Mr. Poe felt himself called upon to vindicate it to the proprietor of the magazine, to whom he wrote:

"There is no necessity of giving the 'Compiler' a reply. The book is *silly enough of itself*, without the aid of any controversy concerning it. I have read it, from beginning to end, and was very much amused at it. My opinion of it is pretty nearly the opinion of the press at large. I have heard no person offer one serious word in its defence."—*Letter to T. W. White.*

Afterwards Mr. Poe became personally acquainted with the author and he then wrote, in his account of "The Literati of New-York City," as follows:

"The Confessions of a Poet made much noise in the literary world, and no little curiosity was excited in regard to its author, who was generally supposed to be John Neal. . . . The 'Confessions,' however, far surpassed any production of Mr. Neal's . . . *He* has done nothing which, as a whole, is *even respectable*, and 'The

Confessions' are quite remarkable for their artistic unity and perfection. But on higher regards they are to be commended. *I do not think, indeed, that a better book of its kind has been written in America.* . . . Its scenes of passion are intensely wrought, its incidents are striking and original, its sentiments audacious and suggestive at least, if not at all times tenable. In a word, it is that rare thing, a fiction of *power* without rudeness."

I will adduce another example of the same kind. In a notice of the "Democratic Review," for September, 1845, Mr. Poe remarks of Mr. William A. Jone's paper on American Humor:

"There is only one really bad article in the number, and that is insufferable: nor do we think it the less a nuisance because it inflicts upon ourselves individually a passage of maudlin compliment about our being a most 'ingenious critic' and 'prose poet,' with some other things of a similar kind. We thank for his good word no man who gives palpable evidence, in other cases than our own, of his *incapacity*, to distinguish the false from the true—the right from the wrong. If we *are* an ingenious critic, or a prose poet, it is not because Mr. William Jones says so. The truth is that this essay on 'American Humor' is contemptible both in a moral and literary sense—is the composition of an *imitator and a quack*—and disgraces the magazine in which it makes its appearance."—*Broadway Journal*, Vol. ii. No. 11.

In the following week he reconsidered this matter, opening his paper for a defence of Mr. Jones; but at the close of it said—

"If we have done Mr. Jones injustice, we beg his pardon: but we do not think we have."

Yet in a subsequent article in "Graham's Magazine," on "Critics and Criticism," he says of Mr. Jones—referring only to writings of his that had been for years before the public when he printed the above paragraphs:

"Our most analytic, *if not altogether our best critic*, (Mr. Whipple, perhaps, excepted,) is Mr. *William A. Jones*, author of 'The Analyst.' How he would write elaborate criticisms I cannot say; but his summary judgments of authors are, in general, discriminative and profound. In fact, his papers on *Emerson* and on *Macaulay*, published in 'Arcturus,' are better than merely 'profound,' if we take the word in its now desecrated sense; for they are at once pointed, lucid, and just: —as summaries, leaving nothing to be desired."

I will not continue the display of these inconsistencies. As I have already intimated, a volume might be filled with passages to show that his criticisms were guided by no sense of duty, and that his opinions were so variable and so liable to be influenced by unworthy considerations as to be really of no value whatever.

It was among his remarkable habits that he preserved with scrupulous care everything that was published respecting himself or his

works, and everything that was written to him in letters that could be used in any way for the establishment or extension of his reputation. In Philadelphia, in 1843, he prepared with his own hands a sketch of his life for a paper called "The Museum." Many parts of it are untrue, but I refer to it for the purpose of quoting a characteristic instance of perversion in the reproduction of compliments:

"Of 'William Wilson,' Mr. Washington Irving says: 'It is managed in a highly picturesque style, and its singular and mysterious interest is ably sustained throughout. In point of mere style, it is, perhaps, even superior to 'The House of Usher.' It is simpler. In the latter composition, he seems to have been distrustful of his effects, or, rather, too solicitous of bringing them forth fully to the eye, and thus, perhaps, has laid on too much coloring. He has erred, however, on the safe side, that of exurberance, and the evil might easily be remedied, by relieving the style of some of its epithets:' [since done.] 'There would be no fear of injuring the graphic effect, *which is powerful.*' The italics are Mr. Irving's own."

Now Mr. Irving had said in a private letter that he thought the "House of Usher" was clever, and that "a volume of similar stories would be well received by the public." Poe sent him a magazine containing "William Wilson," asking his opinion of it, and Mr. Irving, expressly declining to *publish* a word upon the subject, remarked in the same manner, that "the singular and mysterious interest is well sustained," and that in point of style the tale was "much better" than the "House of Usher," which, he says, "might be improved by relieving the style from some of the epithets: there is no danger of destroying the graphic effect, which is powerful." There is not a word in *italics* in Mr. Irving's letter, the meaning of which is quite changed by Mr. Poe's alterations. And this letter was not only published in the face of an implied prohibition, but made to seem like a deliberately expressed judgment in a public reviewal. In the same way Mr. Poe published the following sentence as an extract from a letter by Miss Barrett:

"Our great poet, Mr. Browning, author of Paracelsus, etc. is *enthusiastic in his admiration* of the rhythm."

But on turning to Miss Barrett's letter I find that she wrote:

"Our great poet, Mr. Browning, the author of 'Paracelsus,' and 'Bells and Pomegranates,' was struck much by the rhythm of that poem."

The piece alluded to is "The Raven."

It is not true, as has been frequently alleged since Mr. Poe's death, that his writings were above the popular taste, and therefore without

a suitable market in this country. His poems were worth as much to magazines as those of Bryant or Longfellow, (though none of the publishers paid him half as large a price for them,) and his tales were as popular as those of Willis, who has been commonly regarded as the best magazinist of his time. He ceased to write for "The Lady's Book" in consequence of a quarrel induced by Mr. Godey's justifiable refusal to print in that miscellany his "Reply to Dr. English," and though in the poor fustian published under the signature of "George R. Graham," in answer to some remarks upon Poe's character in "The Tribune," that individual is made to assume a passionate friendship for the deceased author that would have become a Pythias, it is known that the personal ill-will on both sides was such that for some four or five years *not a line by Poe was purchased for "Graham's Magazine."* To quote again the "Defence of Mr. Poe" in the "Southern Literary Messenger:"

"His changeable humors, his irregularities, his caprices, his total disregard of everything and body, save the fancy in his head, prevented him from doing well in the world. The evils and sufferings that poverty brought upon him, soured his nature, and deprived him of faith in human beings. This was evident to the eye—he believed in nobody, and cared for nobody. Such a mental condition of course drove away all those who would otherwise have stood by him in his hours of trial. He became, and was, an Ishmaelite."

After having, in no ungenerous spirit, presented the chief facts in Mr. Poe's history, not designedly exaggerating his genius, which none held in higher admiration, not bringing into bolder relief than was just and necessary his infirmities, I am glad to offer a portraiture of some of his social qualities, equally beautiful, and—so changeable and inconsistent was the man—as far as it goes, truthful. Speaking of him one day soon after his death, with the late Mrs. Osgood, the beauty of whose character had made upon Poe's mind that impression which it never failed to produce upon minds capable of the apprehension of the finest traits in human nature, she said she did not doubt that my view of Mr. Poe, which she knew indeed to be the common view, was perfectly just, as it regarded him in his relations with men; but to women he was different, and she would write for me some recollections of him to be placed beside my harsher judgments in any notice of his life that the acceptance of the appointment to be his literary executor might render it necessary for me to give to the world. She was an invalid—dying of that consumption by which in a few weeks she was removed to heaven, and calling for pillows to support her while she wrote, she drew this sketch:

"You ask me, my friend, to write for you my reminiscenses of Edgar Poe. For you, who knew and understood my affectionate interest in him, and my frank acknowledgment of that interest to all who had a claim upon my confidence, for you, I will willingly do so. I think no one could know him—no one *has* known him personally—certainly no woman—without feeling the same interest. I can sincerely say, that although I have frequently *heard* of aberrations on his part from 'the straight and narrow path,' I have never *seen* him otherwise than gentle, generous, well-bred, and fastidiously refined. To a sensitive and delicately-nurtured woman, there was a peculiar and irresistible charm in the chivalric, graceful, and almost tender reverence with which he invariably approached all women who won his respect. It was this which first commanded and always retained my regard for him.

"I have been told that when his sorrows and pecuniary embarrassments had driven him to the use of stimulants, which a less delicate organization might have borne without injury, he was in the habit of speaking disrespectfully of the ladies of his acquaintance. It is difficult for me to believe this; for to *me*, to whom he came during the year of our acquaintance for counsel and kindness in all his many anxieties and griefs, he never spoke irreverently of any woman save one, and then only in *my* defence, and though I rebuked him for his momentary forgetfulness of the respect due to himself and to me, I could not but forgive the offence for the sake of the generous impulse which prompted it. Yet even were these sad rumors true of him, the wise and well-informed knew how to regard, as they would the impetuous anger of a spoiled infant, balked of its capricious will, the equally harmless and unmeaning phrenzy of that stray child of Poetry and Passion. For the few unwomanly and slander-loving gossips who have injured *him* and *themselves* only by *repeating* his ravings, when in such moods they have accepted his society, I have only to vouchsafe my wonder and my pity. They cannot surely harm the true and pure, who, reverencing his genius and pitying his misfortunes and his errors, endeavored, by their timely kindness and sympathy, to soothe his sad career.

"It was in his own simple yet poetical home that, to me the character of Edgar Poe appeared in its most beautiful light. Playful, affectionate, witty, alternately docile and wayward as a petted child—for his young, gentle and idolized wife, and for all who came, he had even in the midst of his most harassing literary duties, a kind word, a pleasant smile, a graceful and courteous attention. At his desk beneath the romantic picture of his loved and lost Lenore, he would sit, hour after hour, patient, assiduous and uncomplaining, tracing, in an exquisitely clear chirography and with almost superhuman swiftness, the lightning thoughts—the 'rare and radiant' fancies as they flashed through his wonderful and ever wakeful brain. I recollect, one morning, towards the close of his residence in this city, when he seemed unusually gay and light-hearted. Virginia, his sweet wife, had written me a pressing invitation to come to them; and I, who never could resist her affectionate summons, and who enjoyed his society far more in his own home than elsewhere, hastened to Amity-street. I found him just completing his series of papers entitled 'The Literati of New-York.' 'See,' said he, displaying, in laughing triumph, several little rolls of narrow paper, (he always wrote thus for the press,) 'I am going to show you, by the difference of length in these, the different degrees of estimation in which I hold all you literary people. In each of these, one of you is rolled up and fully discussed. Come, Virginia, help me!' And one

by one they unfolded them. At last they came to one which seemed interminable. Virginia laughingly ran to one corner of the room with one end, and her husband to the opposite with the other. 'And whose lengthened sweetness long drawn out is that?' said I. 'Hear her!' he cried, 'just as if her little vain heart didn't tell her it's herself!'

"My first meeting with the poet was at the Astor House. A few days previous, Mr. Willis had handed me, at the *table d'hote*, that strange and thrilling poem entitled 'The Raven,' saying that the author wanted my opinion of it. Its effect upon me was so singular, so like that of 'wierd, unearthly music,' that it was with a feeling almost of dread, I heard he desired an introduction. Yet I could not refuse without seeming ungrateful, because I had just heard of his enthusiastic and partial eulogy of my writings, in his lecture on American Literature. I shall never forget the morning when I was summoned to the drawing-room by Mr. Willis to receive him. With his proud and beautiful head erect, his dark eyes flashing with the elective light of feeling and of thought, a peculiar, an inimitable blending of sweetness and hauteur in his expression and manner, he greeted me, calmly, gravely, almost coldly; yet with so marked an earnestness that I could not help being deeply impressed by it. From that moment until his death we were friends; although we met only during the first year of our acquaintance. And in his last words, ere reason had forever left her imperial throne in that overtasked brain, I have a touching memento of his undying faith and friendship.

"During that year, while travelling for my health, I maintained a correspondence with Mr. Poe, in accordance with the earnest entreaties of his wife, who imagined that my influence over him had a restraining and beneficial effect. It *had*, as far as this—that having solemnly promised me to give up the use of stimulants, he so firmly respected his promise and me, as never once, during our whole acquaintance, to appear in my presence when in the slightest degree affected by them. Of the charming love and confidence that existed between his wife and himself, always delightfully apparent to me, in spite of the many little poetical episodes, in which the impassioned romance of his temperament impelled him to indulge; of this I cannot speak too earnestly—too warmly. I believe she was the only woman whom he ever truly loved; and this is evidenced by the exquisite pathos of the little poem lately written, called Annabel Lee, of which she was the subject, and which is by far the most natural, simple, tender and touchingly beautiful of all his songs. I have heard it said that it was intended to illustrate a late love affair of the author; but they who believe this, have in their dullness, evidently misunderstood or missed the beautiful meaning latent in the most lovely of all its verses—where he says,

"A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee,
So that her *high-born kinsmen* came,
And bore her away from me."

"There seems a strange and almost profane disregard of the sacred purity and spiritual tenderness of this delicious ballad, in thus overlooking the allusion to the *kindred angels* and the heavenly *Father* of the lost and loved and unforgotten wife.

"But it was in his conversations and his letters, far more than in his published poetry and prose writings, that the genius of Poe was most gloriously revealed. His letters were divinely beautiful, and for hours I have listened to him, entranced

by strains of such pure and almost celestial eloquence as I have never read or heard elsewhere. Alas! in the thrilling words of Stoddard,

"He might have soared in the morning light,
But he built his nest with the birds of night!
But he lies in dust, and the stone is rolled
Over the sepulchre dim and cold;
He has cancelled all he has done or said,
And gone to the dear and holy dead.
Let us forget the path he trod,
And leave him now, to his Maker, God."

The influence of Mr. Poe's aims and vicissitudes upon his literature, was more conspicuous in his later than in his earlier writings. Nearly all that he wrote in the last two or three years—including much of his best poetry,—was in some sense biographical; in draperies of his imagination, those who take the trouble to trace his steps, will perceive, but slightly concealed, the figure of himself. The lineaments here disclosed, I think, are not different from those displayed in this biography, which is but a filling up of the picture. Thus far the few criticisms of his life or works that I have ventured have been suggested by the immediate examination of the points to which they referred. I add but a few words, of more general description.

In person he was below the middle height, slenderly but compactly formed, and in his better moments he had in an eminent degree that air of gentlemanliness which men of a lower order seldom succeed in acquiring.

His conversation was at times almost supra-mortal in its eloquence. His voice was modulated with astonishing skill, and his large and variably expressive eyes looked repose or shot fiery tumult into theirs who listened, while his own face glowed, or was changeless in pallor, as his imagination quickened his blood or drew it back frozen to his heart. His imagery was from the worlds which no mortals can see but with the vision of genius. Suddenly starting from a proposition, exactly and sharply defined, in terms of utmost simplicity and clearness, he rejected the forms of customary logic, and by a crystalline process of accretion, built up his ocular demonstrations in forms of gloomiest and ghastliest grandeur, or in those of the most airy and delicious beauty—so minutely and distinctly, yet so rapidly, that the attention which was yielded to him was chained till it stood among his wonderful creations—till he himself dissolved the spell, and brought

his hearers back to common and base existence, by vulgar fancies or exhibitions of the ignoblest passion.

He was at all times a dreamer—dwelling in ideal realms—in heaven or hell—peopled with the creatures and the accidents of his brain. He walked the streets, in madness or melancholy, with lips moving in distinct curses, or with eyes upturned in passionate prayer, (never for himself, for he felt, or professed to feel, that he was already damned, but) for their happiness who at the moment were objects of his idolatry;—or, with his glances introverted to a heart gnawed with anguish, and with a face shrouded in gloom, he would brave the wildest storms; and all night, with drenched garments and arms beating the winds and rains, would speak as if to spirits that at such times only could be evoked by him from the Aidenn, close by whose portals his disturbed soul sought to forget the ills to which his constitution subjected him—close by the Aidenn where were those he loved—the Aidenn which he might never see, but in fitful glimpses, as its gates opened to receive the less fiery and more happy natures whose destiny to sin did not involve the doom of death.

He seemed, except when some fitful pursuit subjugated his will and engrossed his faculties, always to bear the memory of some controlling sorrow. The remarkable poem of "The Raven" was probably much more nearly than has been supposed, even by those who were very intimate with him, a reflection and an echo of his own history. *He* was that bird's

> "——unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
> Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
> Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
> Of 'Never—never more.'"

Every genuine author, in a greater or less degree, leaves in his works, whatever their design, traces of his personal character: elements of his immortal being, in which the individual survives the person. While we read the pages of the "Fall of the House of Usher," or of "Mesmeric Revelations," we see in the solemn and stately gloom which invests one and in the subtle metaphysical analysis of both, indications of the idiosyncracies—of what was most remarkable and peculiar—in the author's intellectual nature. But we see here only the better phases of his nature, only the symbols of his juster action, for his harsh experience had deprived him of all faith, in man or woman. He had made up his mind upon the numberless complexities of the social world, and the whole system with him was an imposture. This

conviction gave a direction to his shrewd and naturally unamiable character. Still, though he regarded society as composed altogether of villains, the sharpness of his intellect was not of that kind which enabled him to cope with villany, while it continually caused him by overshots to fail of the success of honesty. He was in many respects like Francis Vivian, in Bulwer's novel of "The Caxtons." Passion, in him, comprehended many of the worst emotions which militate against human happiness. You could not contradict him, but you raised quick choler; you could not speak of wealth, but his cheek paled with gnawing envy. The astonishing natural advantages of this poor boy—his beauty, his readiness, the daring spirit that breathed around him like a fiery atmosphere—had raised his constitutional self-confidence into an arrogance that turned his very claims to admiration into prejudices against him. Irascible, envious—bad enough, but not the worst, for these salient angles were all varnished over with a cold repellant synicism, his passions vented themselves in sneers. There seemed to him no moral susceptibility; and, what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little or nothing of the true point of honor. He had, to a morbid excess, that desire to rise which is vulgarly called ambition, but no wish for the esteem of the love of his species; only the hard wish to succeed—not shine, not serve—succeed, that he might have the right to despise a world which galled his self-conceit.

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